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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE WOMEN OF BROWNING: ~~A STUDY OF THE~~ TYPES OF FEMININE PERSONALITY IN THE WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING

Submitted by

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION: Page

Chapter I

LADY CARLISLE: THE SELF-EFFACING WOMAN 1

1. The Personality of Lady Carlisle
2. Analysis of the Development of Her Self-Negation
3. The Price of Self-negation

Chapter II

PALMA: INTRIGUE MOTIVATED BY LOVE 13

1. Palma: Sordello's Daphne
2. Palma's Individualization

Chapter III

PIPPA: THE RATIONALE OF UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE 21

1. Physical Characteristics of Pippa
2. Mental and Moral Aspects
3. Illustrations of Pippa's Specific Influence

Chapter IV

MILDRED: BROWNING'S "JULIET" OR THE GIRL WHO "WAS SO YOUNG" 39

1. Lady Mildred, a Child of Fourteen
2. Lady Mildred's Maturity
3. Lady Mildred's Death

Chapter V

COLOMBE: THE CONFLICT BETWEEN CONSCIENCE AND DUTY 53

1. Colombe of Ravestein, Later Duchess of Juliers and Cleves
2. Awakening Sense of Interest and Responsibility
3. Complicating Factors in the Rôle of Duchess

Chapter VI

DOMIZIA: A STUDY IN THE FUTILITY OF RETALIATION 67

1. Domizia's Desire for Revenge

Page

2. Proposed Plan of Revenge
3. Ultimate Failure of Plan
4. Final Conviction as to Value of Revenge

Chapter VII.

LUCREZIA: THE INHIBITING INFLUENCE OF A SELFISH WIFE 79

1. Its potentiality Foreshadowed by the Personality of Lucrezia
2. Analysis of Its Significance to Andrea
3. Its Effect Upon Andrea

Chapter VIII.

CONSTANCE: THE PROSTITUTION OF THE SPIRIT OF SELF-SACRIFICE 88

1. Tangible Attributes of Constance's Personality
2. Subtle Aspects of Individuality

Chapter IX.

JAMES LEE'S WIFE: THE PATHOS OF DISILLUSIONED LOVE 100

1. Indication of Lessening Love
2. Unsuccessful Attempt to Allay Fear
3. Philosophical Reflection on Love
4. Fatalistic Acceptance of Unrequited Love
5. Final Sacrifice For Love

Chapter X.

POMPILIA: THE FOCAL POINT IN THE SYNOPTIC VIEW OF TRUTH 111

1. Orientation of the Character Pompilia
2. The Personality of Pompilia

Chapter XI.

BALAUSTION: THE CAPITOLIZATION OF SELF-POSSESSION 127

1. Her Youth as Represented in "Balaustion's Adventure"
2. Her Maturity as Represented in "Aristophanes' Apology"

Table Of Contents Cont.

Page

Chapter XII.

FIFINE: THE INFLUENCE OF MORAL UNSTABLIZATION 142

1. Fifine, The Darked-skinned Rope-dancer
2. Fifine, The Unmoral Personality
3. Fifine, Her Unstablizing Influence

Chapter XIII.

FEMININE TYPES SLIGHTLY DELINEATED 151

1. Ottima
2. Polyxena
3. Cristina
4. Evelyn Hope
5. Porphyria

Chapter XIV.

NAMELESS BUT REAL CHARACTERS 170

1. Any Wife To Any Husband
2. Dis Aliter Visum
3. A Pretty Woman
4. A Light Woman
5. Time's Revenges
6. The Laboratory
7. Flight of the Duchess
8. The Italian in England
9. By The Fireside
10. One Word More

General Summary

Bibliography

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Introduction

The writer in this thesis has attempted to make a careful study of the work of Robert Browning for the purpose of revealing his insight into feminine personality. One finds that Browning has dealt with almost every phase of woman's personality. He carefully creates and delineates each type until it stands forth as a separate entity usually with some one character trait that makes it highly individualized. It is interesting to note that Browning never makes use of physical beauty, wealth, or high social standing as the sole justification for character-interest. He has drawn his women from at least three different nationalities -- English, Greek, and Italian -- and from every sphere of life. We find a gradation from the lowest type, represented in women like Ottima, to the highest type, exemplified by Balaustion or Pompilia.

The universality of Browning's personal experience plus the deep understanding and appreciation of his wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, has greatly aided him in the accuracy with which he is able to disclose the real nature of woman. Someone has said that man is able to know and to understand woman and her influence to a greater degree than she is able to know and understand herself. This may be regarded as true in respect of Browning's knowledge of woman; for nowhere in modern poetry do we find a writer who has described woman with such variety and versatility as he exhibits.

To attempt a complete treatment of Browning's women is beyond the limits of this thesis; yet a sufficient number both of major and of minor characters have been selected with a view to showing the more fundamental aspects of femininity. Almost an utter disregard for the story element has been maintained throughout, except in so far as it directly contributes to the delineation of the character under discussion.

Brief summaries will be found at the close of each shapter. At the end is a general summary in which the writer has attempted to recapitulate succinctly the various character traits depicted in Browning's women, so as to leave in the mind of the reader a composite picture of woman as seen under the various circumstances of life.

Lady Carlisle: The Self-effacing Woman.

Introduction: The Orientation of Lady Carlisle

I. The Personality of Lady Carlisle:
   - A. General characteristics
   - B. Her relation to Strafford

II. Analysis of the Development of Her Self-negation:
   - A. Her willingness to aid Strafford
   - B. Knowledge of the situation
   - C. Attempts to disclose the truth
   - D. Unwillingness to destroy Strafford's faith in Charles
   - E. Soliciation of the interest of other
   - F. Constant source of confidence
   - G. Final attempt to save Strafford

III. The Price of Self-negation:
   - A. Utter self-sacrifice
   - B. Denial of expression of love
   - C. Abuse of the law of recompense
   - D. Final loss of the object of her love

General summary:

Browning's first attempt at tragedy is represented in the historical drama "Strafford." The drama evolves from the impeachment and condemnation of the character Strafford, whose staunch devotion to Charles I and his cause is given in colorful contrast to Pym and the popular party. Strafford is befriended by Lady Carlisle and urged to see the King in his true perspective; but warnings avail nothing. Strafford refuses to see the dual nature of the King, and so even in the hour when inevitable death awaits him, he kneels to Pym for the King's pardon. The play itself was a dramatic failure, but one finds a marked interest in the historical characters, and even more especially in Lady Carlisel, who is not a historical personage but purely a product of the author's imagination.

Lady Carlisle is represented as a woman of high birth, with the social standing and prestige which warrant her close association with the royal family. The exact nature of her relationship is not disclosed by Browning. Her physical appearance is also of minor importance; the author but suggests in a phrase or two here and there what her appearance might have been. She must have been young, for Strafford rarely calls her by her name; instead he refers to her as "Girl."

Straf. "Girl, your hair
Is glossier than the Queen's!
Car. Is that to ask
A curl of me?" (1)

(1) Everyman's Library: Poems and Plays of Robert Browning 1833-1844. p. 163.

" . . . you, the slight graceful girl
Tall for a flowering lily --" (1)

In these descriptive phrases one catches a glimpse of Lady Carlisle and comes to realize that she was tall and graceful, with clear cut features suggesting strong facial lines, yet with that surface manner which many women use as a blind for their truer emotions. It is not difficult to understand how she successfully hid her feelings from Strafford. Her voice is sweet and gentle, disclosing the softer, more sympathetic nature within the heart.

"That voice of hers ...
You'd think she had a heart cometimes!" (2)

Whatever might have been her physical charm, it is far surpassed by her finer mental powers and moral idealism. She is in the position to learn the actual happenings in regard to the political intrigue. With keen insight into human nature, she analyzes each personality until she has discovered the motivating factors in their actions and is able to foretell the results. Lady Carlisle is the embodiment of the finer spirit of self-forgetfulness; she has a deep sense of duty which leads her to the point of sacrifice of self in the fulfillment of what she believes to be that duty. She is -- as we shall see more clearly later -- brave, courageous, and magnanimous, yet totally lacking in that power of self-assertion which is necessary in order that the true

(1) Everyman, p. 187.
(2) Ibid., p. 164.

worth of her personality may be recognized.

There exists between Lady Carlisle and Strafford a strong friendship, which is mutually recognized; but on her part there is more than mere friendship, she is passionately in love with Strafford, although he seems totally unaware of this love. Lady Carlisle is unwilling to make her love known; on the contrary, she avoids every temptation to confess her love and quietly and in unpretentious ways gives of herself to him with an inner hope that somehow he will see and understand that more than mere friendship prompts her service. Unselfishness or the desire for Strafford's good rather than her own is the motivating factor in this self-negation.

Lady Carlisle, immediately upon learning of Strafford's return to England, goes to him. From that time to his death one can trace a continuous line of loving service given often at a cost to herself and without any anticipation of reciprocity. Strafford has complete faith in her, both in regard to her knowledge of the situation and her sacred confidence regarding the facts which he discloses to her. Lady Carlisle is the kind of woman that Strafford needs, but he fails to understand why he needs her. In this case he needs her because she is reliable; he may call on her for almost anything and she will not fail him. He could not only trust her but he could be certain that, even after a long period of separation, he would find her unchanged; she would be loy-

al to him:

> "I know, but Lucy,
> Go on, dear Lucy -- Oh I need you so!
> I reckoned on you from the first! -- Go on!
> . . . Was sure could I once see this gentle girl
> When I arrived, she'd throw an hour away
> To help her weary friend. . . ." (1)

Lady Carlisle is in a position to comprehend the dual nature of the King. The fact that she knew that Charles was using Strafford as his tool and that in the end, having secured what he desired, he would turn against him, exemplifies her interest in Strafford and her able judgment of the situation. This requires a clear insight into personality and this she possesses. Her sense of loyalty to Strafford demanded that she tell him, that she warn him of the danger he is risking, and of the penalty which undoubtedly he must pay. Once or twice she made the attempt to warn Strafford, but blinded as he was by his intense love for the King he would not see the truth. Even greater tact and wisdom is shown in the fact that she realized that for Strafford not to know the truth was better. He was unwell, worn and weary from long seiges in Ireland, and his faith in Charles seemed to be the thing which was holding him, Once again does one see the tender feminine nature of Lady Carlisle, ministering alike to the body as well as to the soul of Strafford. Rather than destroy his faith she devoted every ounce of her energy with the hope of winning Charles and his party to Strafford and to the appreciation of his true worth. For his sake she

(1) Everyman, p. 143.

was willing to compromise with truth, and thus, by evading, she left Strafford's faith unshattered and spared him the conscious pain of realizing that Charles was unworthy of his love:

> "I could not tell him . . . sick too! . . . And the King
> Shall love him! Wentworth here, who can withstand
> His look? . . .
> O 'twas well done to spare him all the pain!" (1)

Lady Carlisle possessed such a degree of unselfish devotion to Strafford that even in the moment when he was to start for Scotland -- and she knew that it was an unfair unjust move for Charles to permit -- she refused to mention her love as a means to entreat him not to risk his life for Charles' sake:

> "Ah, no --
> One must not lure him from a love like that!
> Oh, let him love the King and die!" (2)

When Strafford was once gone and she knew that her powers alone were inadequate to save him, she forgot pride and personal prejudice to sloicit the interest of others who had in their power to help him. In her words to the Queen at the time of his impeachment one may read the depth of her feeling for Strafford. Her interest in him has carried her to the point where she not only disregards her own reputation but the reputation of others if she can but save Strafford:

> Queen. "And what am I to do?
> Car. What do! Fail, Madam!
> Be ruined for his sake! what matters how
> So it but stand on record that you made
> An effort -- only one?" (3)

(1) Everyman, p. 145.
(2) Ibid., p. 163.
(3) Ibid., p. 168

Her efforts to secure the interest and help of others were futile. Yet when Strafford returned she summoned a super-courage and faced him cheerfully, unwilling for him to suspect his real danger. Ever acting as his confidant, listening patiently to his plans and counterplans, never showing the slightest sign of disinterestedness, she possessed a tact peculiarly her own, and, aided by her own insight into the situation, was able to discuss it intelligently with him.

When Strafford's danger reached its height and all were openly opposed to him Lady Carlisle, with a moral courage and bravery previously unequaled, forgot herself or her own desires to stand by him. Her conscience no longer allowed her, even for his sake, to gloze over the truth; Strafford must know all:

> "I shall see Strafford -- speak to him:
> . . . And if I tell
> The truth? What's gained by falsehood? There they stand
> Whose trade it is -- whose life it is! How vain
> To gild such rottenness! Strafford shall know,
> Thoroughly know them!" (1)

This statement has come only after a bitter struggle with herself wherein she has sought every possible means of sparing Strafford the pathos of such disillusionment; but there seemed to be no other way out. She must for his sake act quickly. Yet when the actual moment for telling him presented itself she refused, she could not destroy his faith.

Lady Carlisle's friendship for Strafford never changed nor weakened:

> "For life or death I am your own, dear friend!" (2)

(1) Everyman, p. 183
(2) Ibid., p. 145

She stood true to her pledge of friendship even in Strafford's final imprisonment. Without counting the cost to herself, if she be apprehended in her scheming, she planned a means for his escape and with that supreme self-negation refused to allow herself to be credited with the courage to undertake such a plan, even in the event that it prove successful. Instead Strafford was to believe that he received his freedom at the King's hand:

> "Only, if I succeed, remember -- Charles
> Has saved him! He would hardly value life
> Unless his gift." (1)

Lady Carlisle has repeatedly refused to consider herself; in fact, it would seem as if there was no height of self-forgetfulness or self-sacrifice left for her to attain. Yet when all seemed lost to Strafford she further sacrificed pride and personal feeling and, throwing discretion to the winds, passionately and earnestly entreated Strafford to follow her and be saved. The same self-forgetfulness and humility which led her to refuse recognition for the attempt to save Strafford again led her to apologize to Strafford now that he knew the truth:

> "You know all the! Why, I thought
> It looked so well that Charles should save you --
> Charles
> Alone . . . 'tis shame that you should owe it me--
> Me . . . no, not shame! Strafford, you'll not
> feel shame
> At being saved by me?" (2)

(1) Everyman, p. 195.
(2) Ibid., p. 262.

In her final attempt to save him her love for him reveals itself; she cannot longer keep it hidden. Strafford must know that she loves him, but he seems not to realize the depth of her love. This love has not been born in a moment; while Strafford believed Lady Carlisle to love him but as a friend she gave him the greater love of woman for man. Throughout the entire drama one may sense this love, realize how it burns in the heart of Lady Carlisle, and understand how she in her humanness longs for some recognition of it, although she is too unselfish to demand it:

> "You thought of me,
> Dear Wentworth?" (1)
>
> " -- And he did really think of me?" (2)

She never was able to confess her love for Strafford, rather she suppressed it sincerely believing such suppression to be for his good. One may realize something of the inner turmoil of her soul, caused by the constant repression of her love, in the passage which follows, when for a moment she lets love express itself only to realize that Strafford loves not her but the King. This is the only suggestion of the inner struggle, for with moral courage she forever represses that which should have been expressed:

> " . . . You would perish, too! So sure! . . .
> Could you but know what 'tis to bear, my Strafford,
> One Image stamped within you, turning blank
> The else imperial brilliance of your mind, --
> A weakness, but most precious, -- like a flaw
> I' the diamond which would shape forth some sweet face

(1) Everyman, p. 144.
(2) Ibid., p. 145

Yet to create, and meanwhile treasured there
Lest Nature lose her gracious though forever!
* * *
'Tis past . . .
I shall not serve him worse for that one brief
And passionate hope . . . silent forever now!" (1)

Even though she would, she cannot kill her love for him, she is successful only in so far as she wilfully sacrifices the object of her love, for the King:

"The King -- ever the King!
No thought of one beside, whose little word
Unveils the King to him -- one word from me --
Which yet I do not breathe!
Ah, have I spared
Strafford a pang, and shall I seek reward
Beyond the memory? Surely, too, some way
He is the better for my love . . . No, no,
He would not look so joyous -- I'll believe
His very eye would never sparkle thus,
Had I not prayed for him this long, long while!" (2)

Her sacrifice of self and love has been made consciously and willingly because in her heart she desired his good rather than her own. Her final admission of love comes not as a desire to satisfy self but as a last resort with the hope of creating in him the desire for life. Had there been the slightest degree of selfishness in it she would have yielded to Hollis' plea to declare her love:

Hol. "My gentle girl,
He should know all -- should love you -- but 'tis vain!
Car. No -- no -- too late now! Let him love the King!" (3)

(1) Everyman, p. 163.
(2) Ibid., p. 174.
(3) Ibid., p. 195.

Lady Carlisle is a notable representation of the finer qualities of womanhood. She has known Strafford and loved him, first as a friend and secondly as a lover; his age and the fact of his former marriage do not lessen this love, rather it grows and bears rich fruitage in devoted, loyal, unselfish service to the object of her love. Repeatedly does she give of her time, her interest, her attention, and her love, with no idea of her own worth, with little thought of what it is costing her to make the gift, and with no demand whatsoever upon Strafford. She is magnanimous and brave with a courage unequaled in many women:

> "Speak to her, Strafford!
> See how she trembles . . . waiting for your voice!
> The world's to learn its bravest story yet!" (1)

However there is another aspect to the situation. The fact that Strafford says,

> "I think if you could know how much
> I love you, you would be repaid, my girl!" (2)

is not sufficient. He has made no former expression of this love, nor has he shown any deep appreciation for what she has meant to him. One feels a repulsiveness because Strafford has violated the law of compensation. Lady Carlisle lacks a certain degree of self-assertion which perhaps would have saved the situation. Her self-sacrifice or total abnegation of self becomes a weakness which lessens the beauty of her personality. The dominating fault in her life is her

(1) Everyman, p. 203.
(2) Ibid., p. 203.

unselfishness, a thing which to a certain degree is beautiful, but when it is carried to the point of total self-negation it becomes repulsive because it destroys personality. This characteristic may in part be attributed to the moral standards of the Victorian age, yet to a reader in the present generation there reamins that repulsiveness due to an over-emphasis of this virtue.

Palma: Intrigue Motivated by Love

Introduction: A Brief Synopsis of the Action of the Story

I. Palma: Sordello's Daphne:

A. Parentage and early childhood

B. Physical characteristics and personal power

II. Palma's Individualization:

A. Her personality:

1. Social and political endowment

2. Finer feminine sentiments

3. Self-mastery

4. Ideal of love

5. Its fulfillment in Sordello

6. Political ambitions and their motivation

B. Specific influence in Sordello's life:

1. At the Palace of Verona

2. Street in Ferrara

3. Vaulted chamber

C. Seeming discrepancies:

1. Political ambitions

2. Selfish desire for personal good

General Summary:

The supposed obscurity of meaning in Browning's Sordello has caused many to leave it unread, thus losing the value of its message to them. The poem Sordello opens at the end of the first quarter of the thirteenth century. It has for its historical background the formation of the Lombard League. The poem represents the political strife between the allied Guelf cities and the Ghibellines of Northern Italy. Sordello, the chief character, is then a young man of thirty years; he was born during the fierce battle of Vicenza, and his life has been saved by Adelaide, the second wife of Ezzelino da Romano II, who carried him safely to Goito. In truth he is the son of Elcorte, an archer. Palma (or Cunizza), the daughter of Ezzelino by his first wife Agnes Este, is also at Goito, where she and Sordello first meet as boy and girl, and where she becomes a part of his first great dream.

Later, at the death of Adelaide, Palma discovers the real identity of Sordello, whom she, through chance meeting at a Court of Love, has heard sing. Falling in love with him, she summons Sordello to Verona, later making known to him his identity and stating her love for him.

The next section of the story follows with the appeal to Sordello as Salinguerra's son to take active side with the Ghibellines. Salinguerra's placing of the Emperor's badge on Sordello denotes the sign of active leadership for this party. Salinguerra recognezes in the possible union of Palma and Sordello an added source of strength for the

Emperor's cause. Palma urges Sordello to accept the badge of office, utilizing all possibel political intrigue, but Sordello already has been convinced that the Guelf party represents the truer cause of humanity. Despite the dual temptation of Palma's love and of political power, had life been spared him, he would have devoted his strength to the cause of humanity as he saw it. The entire poem deals with the life and development of the soul of Sordello and his death just at the moment when the spiritual crisis is reached.

Our interest centers in the personality of Palma and the influence of that life upon the soul of Sordello.

Palma is the daughter of Ezzelino, an Italian podesta, by his first wife Agnes Este. Her childhood home is at Goito, a little village of Northern Italy within the Lombardy district; her girlhood and young womanhood are spent at Verona.

Browning has endowed Palma with all the beauty of a Titian model, -- fair features, pearl white skin with dawn's first pink upon it, blue eyes wide open in their frankness, rich masses of curly hair pure gold and fine as spun silk, nymph-like form with the grace and poise of a young goddess, and a radiance of personality likened to sunbeams. Apollo's Daphne could not surpass her beauty:

> "How the tresses curled
> Into a sumptuous swell of gold and wound
> About her like a glory! even the ground
> Was bright as with spilt sunbeams; breathe not, breathe
> Not! -- poised, see, one leg doubled underneath,
> Its small foot buried in the dimpling snow,

Rests, but the other, listlessly below,
O'er the couch-side feeling for cool air,
The vein-streaks swollen a richer violet where
The languid blood lies heavily; yet calm
On her slight prop, each flat and outspread palm,
As but suspended in the act to rise
By consciousness of beauty, whence her eyes
Turn with so frank a triumph, for she meets
Apollo's gaze in the pine glooms." (1)

Palma becomes Sordello's Daphne; he has in childhood seen her and now in manhood seeks her for his own. Womanhood has not lessened Palma's beauty, it has brought a full consciousness of it to her and a frank triumph in its power over others. This beauty and loveliness is but the aid to that irresistible influence which she exerts over Sordello when, as a young minstrel, he has drawn near her Court of Love; and with scarce six words she has praised his song, honored him by the placing of her scarf about his shoulders, and chosen him for her minstrel.

Palma is not alone beautiful but fate has dealt kindly with her. She is a woman of high rank and social position. Her parental influence has provided for her a keen interest in politics and a share in the political schemes of the time. By force of circumstances she becomes the political type of woman common to her century; she has the mental power to mould and direct affairs of state.

Yet with all her knowledge of political affairs, desire for power, and the entanglements of a betrothal by her father to a man in whom she has no interest other than political,

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 83.

she retains passion, sentiment, tenderness and bewildering charm. Her soul dreams of a soul beyond her own, who some day coming to her will awaken within her the finer forces of her character and enable her, through loving him, to do all that she longs to do for Italy. All the finer passions of her nature are held in abeyance to this dream:

> ". .. in dream was Palma subjected
> To some out-soul, which dawned not though she pined
> Delaying till its advent, heart and mind,
> Their life. 'How dared I let expand the force
> Within me, till some out-soul, whose resource
> It grew for, should direct it?'" (1)

So in expectation she awaits

> "-- The first of intimations, whom to love;
> The next, how love him." (2)

And her heart cries:

> "'Waits he not the waking year?
> His almond-blossoms must be honey-ripe
> By this; to welcome him, fresh runnels stripe
> The thawed revines; because of him, the wind
> Walks life a herald. I shall surely find
> Him now!'" (3)

Palma finds her lover in the person of Sordello because in his personality are the finer things which her soul seeks. To her, he represents the spiritual rather than the physical aspects of life. She is drawn to him by the power of his soul, so that when the time is fitting she declares her love for him, Love and ambition are linked. As the motivating force of her future life she lays the plans for one of the

(1) (2) (3) Camb. Ed., p. 95.

most successful of political intrigues. In brief her plan is to secure her father's estate, to succeed in making Sordello ruler of Lombardy, and ultimately to frustrate her father's plan of her marriage to Count Richard by marriage to Sordello. Palma's early training has left little to be desired concerning the knowledge of political intrigue; we see in her future scheming one of the shrewdest business women of all Browning's creations.

Palma has the power to exert a special influence over Sordello, and we find this influence appearing strongest at three separate turning points in Sordello's thinking. First, it is in the secret room of the palace of Verona, when alone with Sordello she carefully explains to him her political policy; that is, how he may be king and carry on the age-old warfare with the Pontiff and ultimately restore the peaceful rule; and afterwards, at evening, when she leans with him over the balcony, gazing down into a sea of torches whence the grey-haired councelors urged the singing mob to battle. Her love and power draw him to a slight degree out of himself. Secondly, her influence is felt when with Sordello she enters the streets of Ferrara. She plans to show him the men that are the embodiment of her cause, and at the sight of these men she awakens in him a sense of his duty toward mankind. Over and over he discusses the merits of each party with Palma. Thirdly, after the confession of Adelaide's story concerning Sordello's identity and Salinguerra's

dramatic response to the situation, she is alone with Salinguerra in the vaulted room below the chamber. Here while awaiting an indication of her influence in the life of Sordello in regard to the side he will take, that of Emperor of Pope, Sordello's death occurs. Nowhere is there a more beautiful description of her love-motivated ideal for the new world that she and Sordello would build in Northern Italy than in her words here. She has by her influence and her love awakened Sordello's soul, and death has but freed it to a larger life. Palma, conscious of her influence, waits with paitence its results in each specific case:

> "Never ask
> Of Palma more'. She sat, knowing her task
> Was done, the labor of it, -- for, success
> Concerned not Palma, passion's votaress
> Triumph at height, and thus Sordello crowned--" (1)

Death alone has defeated Palma's political ambitions, which, transfigured by love, became a credible and lofty idealism worthy of her full devotion. Always her marked intellect and shrewd planning are softened by love and an inherent sense of duty. There is a possibility that her persistent pursuit of desired ends depicts a selfishness of personality which cannot be commended. Yet in a larger sense her conduct is not pure selfishness; her whole life seems to illustrate the fact that those who consciously choose what is best for the people as a whole often unconsciously are apt to start with a more selfish choice of

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 119.

what is best for them individually. Palma, in planning her own and Sordello's greatest good, no doubt, had those plans been fulfilled, chose that which would have been best for the people as a whole.

Palma from girlhood through maturity represents to us the alert, active, keenly intellectual type of womanhood, endowed with social and political power, invested with physical charm and loveliness, held true by a strong idealism and devotion to a cause, possessed of a self-control that denotes self-mastery, utilizing a shrewd businesslike ability that accomplished its end, and exerting a strong beneficial influence upon the life of another. The cold picture of intellectual and political power is softened and made warm by her patient devotion and tender feeling toward Sordello, and above all by that inherent capacity for loving and being loved. Nowhere else have we found such a complete welding of the emotions and intellect as in Palma.

Pippa: the Rationale of Unconscious Influence

Introduction: Resumé of Story

I. Physical Characteristics of Pippa:-
   A. Personal description
   B. General impression

II. Mental and Moral Aspect of Pippa's Personality
   A. Diligence, faithfulness, industry
   B. Purity, truth, goodness
   C. Love of Nature
   D. Spiritual sensitivity and appreciation of higher values in life
   E. Imaginative powers
   F. Unenviousness, cheerfulness, contentment

III. Illustrations of Pippa's Specific Influence:-
   A. Morning:-
      1. Sebald's and Ottima's situation
      2. Pippa's first song and its influence
   B. Noon:-
      1. Jules and Phene's marriage
      2. Pippa's second song and its influence
   C. Evening:-
      1. Luigi and his Mother
      2. Pippa's third song and its influence
   D. Night:-
      1. The Bishop and his accomplice
      2. Pippa's fourth song and its influence

IV. Pippa's Philosophy of Life:-

1. The possibility of influence

2. Its practicality in her own life

General Summary

In the sleepy little village of Asolo, hidden deep among the foot-hills of the Venetian Alps, scarce thirty miles from Venice, is laid the scene of "Pippa Passes." The drama is divided into four sections or acts -- Morning, Noon, Evening, and Night -- each a segment of that one day which was Pippa's yearly holiday from the silk mill. Pippa awakes with the first rays of the sun, determined to make the most of her one day. She spends this day wandering carefree through the village, singing, all the while thinking of its happiest men and women and fancying herself one and another of them in succession. There are four chief persons referred to, each representing a different problem: Ottima, whose aged husband is owner of the silk-mill, is in love with Sebald; Phene, who that very morning became the bride of Jules, the French sculptor; Luigi who spends the evening with his mother in the turret; and, lastly, the good Bishop of Asolo. The four divisions of the drama deal respectively with these persons and show the reality of the actual situation which exists for each of them and the unconscious influence of Pippa upon them as, on her errand of joy, she passes by singing. Night comes and she returns home, happy from her holiday, and confident that all are alike in God's sight, there are no great nor small. The drama is unified by the personality of Pippa, and easy transition is brought about through the interludes.

There is much interest on the part of the reader to discover something of the personality of one who can exert such

a real though unconscious influence. Felippa -- who for short is called Pippa -- is just a wisp of an orphan girl, small in stature and young in years, with a freshness of youth which long days in the mill have not taken from her. She was an attractive girl in features and in manner: black shining hair, with possibly a touch of curl to it; black eyes that were as deep, sparkling, pools of cool water, hid beneath eyelashes blacker yet; fair skin just a bit too pale, from long hours in the mill; bare-footed yet neat and clean, with that wholesome appearance that simple worn clothes cannot lessen. Her whole person radiated that vivacity and fervor of youth that neither work nor social status could change. She is just a sweet, innocent girl, glad for the single holiday that is hers.

But is not Pippa more than just a pretty flower? Is there not a rich fragrance of character that makes her truly lovely? One cannot be long with Pippa and fail to appreciate that deeper aroma of true character. Her occupation is silk winding in the mill at Asolo; day in and day out, from early morning till night, we find her here winding silk;diligently, faithfully, and uncomplainingly she works that she may earn by her own industry her sustenance, meager as it is. How monotonous become those long days with but a single holiday to brighten them! Her work is a wearisome repetition of the same thing, just the winding of silk spool on spool, until often her hands are numb and sore from the careful guiding of the silk.

"But Pippa, just one such mischance would spoil
Her day, that lightens the next twelve month's toil
At wearisome silk-winding coil on coil!" (1)

"Tomorrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,
The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk:
. . . ." (2)

Pippa seems contented with the task that is hers, and thankful for the strength to work. Unlike many mill-hands, who by the very nature of their work become sordid, base, and of low morale, Pippa is genuinely good and true, with a purity and chastity becoming one of far different environment. She is as a lily that has pushed its way up through the slime and mud into the sunshine; her feet tread the daily path of hundrum duty but the heart sings, for she lives above her surroundings. The very way in which she is content to spend this her one free day is proof abundant as to the nature of her enjoyment of the good, pure, true, and beautiful. There can be little sin or lust in the heart of one so childlike, who prefers a day in God's great out-of-doors to all other forms of recreation which might easily have been her choice. Her day of play means to her a day filled with pure enjoyment of life; so different is she from that group of girls standing on the street corner which our author refers to in those pathetic words "poor-girls":

"Oh Day! if I squander a wavelet of thee,
A mite of my twelve-hours treasure
The least of thy gazes or glances
(Be they grants thou art bound to or gifts above
measure)

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 129.
(2) Ibid., p. 130.

One of thy choices or one of thy chances,
(Be they tasks God imposed thee, or freaks at thy pleasure)
-- My Day if I squander such labor or leisure
Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me!" (1)

Her choice of the way in which she will spend her one day leads us to understand her passionate love for nature. She not only loves it, but appreciates it and sees in it the truly beautiful. The sunrise, the sunshine of noon-day, the blue sky, the warm earth, the rain, the mist, the storm, the flowers, the green grass fresh with dew, the pine-woods, the lark and the song thrush, the blackbird, the swallow, and even the lesser forms of nature, the insects, the fire-fly, the grub-worm, the bee, the grass-hopper, -- all are an intricate part of her knowledge and appreciation of nature. There is little that her keen eye misses from the time the first rays of the sun creep over the Venetian hills until the black clouds of evening swallow it and it is gone. Nature is real, alive, and almost human to her; from her frequent personification of nature one comes to realize the fellowship with nature that was hers:

"Day!
Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last:
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and suppressed it lay,
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid gray
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away;
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise not to be suppressed,

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 129.

Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed
the world.

* * *

The long blue solemn hours serenely flowing,
Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help and good --
Thy fitful sunshine-minutes, coming, going,
As if earth turned from work, in game-some mood --
All shall be mind!" (1)

And again:

"But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?
-- With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,
Down the grass path gray with dew,
Under the pine-wood blind with boughs
Where the swallow never flew
As yet, nor cicala dared carouse --" (2)

Her interest in the flowers and insects is but another phase of her love of nature:

"Even my lily's asleep -- I vow:
Wake up -- here's a friend I plucked you
Call this flower a heart's-ease now
Something rare, let me instruct you,
Is this -- with petals triply swollen,
Three times spotted, thrice the pollen
While the leaves and parts that witness
The old proportions and their fitness
Here remain, unchanged, unmoved now--" (3)

"The bee with his comb,
The mouse at her dray,
The grub in his tomb
Wile winter away;
But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-worm, I pray,
How fare they?" (4)

One might continue to quote at great length if one were

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 129.
(2) Ibid., p. 130.
(3) Ibid., p. 144.
(4) Ibid., p. 144.

to touch on the many references to nature in Pippa's speeches, but that is not the chief concern. Nature to Pippa was real, but she never conceived of nature alone. There is within her soul that spiritual sensitiveness -- which might be termed religion -- that sees in all of nature the hand of God. God is real to her; she worships and adores, she loves and serves, with implicit trust; no doubt often she slips into the little chapel at Asolo, away from everybody, for her heart is devout, and such a soul must find expression in some form of worship. The hymns of the service have stayed with her. Indeed the words of that beautiful New Year's Hymn, that we find on her lips in the waking hours of the morning and again just before sleep overtakes her, exemplify her belief that God is the ruling force in life. She seems to sense his immanence, his love for his children, his Fatherly care. Even though she cannot understand all that the words imply,

> "God's in his heaven --
> All's right with the world." (1)

God cares for all alike; through this simple faith we come to understand her inner soul, and appreciate its natural expression in prayer and song.

Closely associated with her sensitive spiritual nature comes that which we may term her philosophy of life and love, which is, after all, the essence of life. As she views life, there seems to be a marked discrepancy in the equality of individuals: one has much, one, little; one is able to do

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 133.

great things, another, almost nothing; one has work that is menial, another, exalted freedom to choose what one will do. Yet, as she in her simple way tries to analyze things she comes to that most beautiful conclusion -- namely, that in God's sight all alike are his children and that to him their tasks are of equal importance:

> "All service ranks the same with God:
> If now, as formerly he trod
> Paradise, his presence fills
> Our earth, each only as God wills
> Can work -- God's puppets, best and worst,
> Are we; there is no last nor first.
> Say not a 'small event' ! Why 'small?'
> Costs it more pain that this, ye call
> A 'great event,' should come to pass,
> Than that? Untwine me from the mass
> Of deeds which make up life, one deed
> Power shall fall short in, or exceed!" (1)

Yet there is more in life than the mere inequality of work, there seems to be an unbalanced proportion of love. Pippa as she looks around her, attempting to discern those who possess this true happiness in life, finds that everyone has some form of love in one's life. Pippa's heart yearns for love, but in what form will she find it? There is that lofe of Ottima which becomes all enslaving; the love of husband for his bride, which may in time grow cold; that more tender love of parent , yet even death robs one of this; and lastly that all-satisfying love of God. It is not hard for Pippa to realize the relative value of each and in her simple way come to choose God's love for herself:

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 130.

" . . . do you think I'd choose
That sort of new love to enslave me?
Mine should have lapped me round from the beginning;
As little fear of losing it as winning:
Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their wives,
And only parents love can last our lives:
* * *
"If only I knew
What was my mother's face -- my father's too!
Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
Is God's; then why not have God's love befall
Myself . . .?" (1)

When this thought has worked itself out in her thinking, she realizes that already she has a part in God's great love:

"Now wait! -- even I already seem to share
In God's love: . . ." (2)

Her simple philosophy of life revolves around her sincere faith in God. She is too young to appreciate the rich values in human love and human relationships, her whole process of thinking along this line has been made repulsive by the very atmosphere of her environment.

The kaleidoscopic personality of Pippa presents another new and refreshing aspect to the reader, namely, her marked power of imagination. Pippa, as we have already suggested, has singled out from all the people in that little village of Asolo the four whom she believes to be most happy; she has tried to discover why they are happy, and now in play attempts to enter into their happiness. She imagines herself first one and then another:

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 130.
(2) Ibid., p. 130.

"But this one day, I have leave to go,
And play out my fancy's fullest games:
I may fancy all day -- and it shall be so --
That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names
Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo." (1)

It is with pure joy that she says, "I am" this one or that, imagining herself not only another person but the proud possessor of that person's material wealth and the eager recipient of his imagined joys. Yet with her keen power of imagination -- which makes happy her whole day, and no doubt many other drab days at the mill -- we find not the slightest trace of envy or covetousness . What is more, there is exemplified a marked power of discrimination: were she granted the right to choose she would do so only after careful consideration, for she, poor as she is, is not quite willing to become anyone else save Pippa:

"And more of it, and more of it! -- oh yes --
I will pass each and see their happiness,
And envy none, -- being just as great, no doubt
Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!" (2)

The one allimportant characteristic of little orphan Pippa, which is really the author's excuse for the writing of the drama, and which he makes his central theme, is her helpfulness to those who are in a receptive mood, all unaware that she is helping them. This trait one might term her unconscious influence over the lives of others. This influence may best be understood by glancing at each of the lives that she unconsciously touches in this single day.

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 130.
(2) Ibid., p. 130.

In the morning Pippa starts out on her walk through the village. She first imagines herself to be Ottima, the young wife of Luca the mill-owner. Imagining herself to be this character, it is perfectly natural that she should walk past the estate of Ottima, thus permitting a greater freedom to her fancy in each situation. Ottima is far different from that which Pippa supposes her to be; for, becoming unsatisfied with her aged husband, she seeks a younger love. This she secures in the person of Sebald, whom she has seduced by her personal charm. The outcome is the murder of Luca and the complete demoralization of Sebald. At the moment of indecision, when remorse has entered his soul and he begins to doubt the gain of his action, Pippa passes, singing her most exquisite song:

"The year's at the spring.
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in his heaven --
All's right with the world!" (1)

There is something in her song that strikes Sebald's conscience. He catches and repeats the phrase, "God's in his heaven." Something in the song of that "little ragged girl" touches his soul, and Ottima becomes powerless before this new influence, in which she has no part:

"That little peasant's voice
Has righted all again. Though I be lost,
I know which is the better, never fear,

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 133.

Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,
Nature or trick! -- I see what I have done,
Entirely now!" (1)

Nor is Pippa's influence limited to Sebald; for ultimately Ottima is spiritually saved:

"Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill me --
* * *
Not me -- to him, O God, be merciful!" (2)

Pippa, scarce realizing that her song has been heard, and never dreaming of the good that has come of it, goes happily on her way singing. She tires of being Ottima and for a time would be Phene, the pretty bride of Jules. It is noon and she wanders toward Orcana Valley, hoping to glimpse the happy pair as they return from the wedding. Jules, the famous French sculptor, has brought home his bride only to discover "that some students who owed him a grudge have practiced a cruel cheat upon him; and that the refined woman by whom he fancied himself loved is but an ignorant girl of the lowest class." (3) When the cheat is made known Jules becomes angry; but presently his better nature controls his emotion and he plans a way whereby he may provide for Phene's safety. His thoughts become confused, and he hesitates to do the thing he is planning. Once again in the moment of indecision Pippa passes, singing; this time she sings the love-song of the page who admired his queen but could not have her. To Pippa, this was probably just a love-song she had learned and pos-

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 133.
(2) Ibid., p. 133.
(3) Orr: Handbook to Browning's Works, p. 56.

sibly all unknowingly was now singing, but to Jules it became the weight tossed into the balance. There is a striking similarity between the tragic love of the page for Kate and his present situation. After a moment he recognizes that his is but the reverse: instead of adoring, he is adored, and why not rightly so? Pippa's words have awakened in him a sense of his moral responsibility to Phene. He no longer desires to send Phene away rather he would keep her whom his love has awakened to pure love, and together they will start anew. Thus Pippa's second song unconsciously becomes an instrument for marked good to others.

Then evening draws near. Young Luigi and his Mother have come, as was their custom, to the turret. Luigi is but a lad in his teens, who has felt the patriotic call of his country to free it from the Austrian Emperor, whose hand of tyranny holds all Italy in terror. Luigi's Mother, fearful of the outcome, and more especially of her son's safety, has all but dissuaded him from the attempt, when Pippa's song is heard. This time it is a legendary folk song,concerning some early king, which she is singing. Luigi hesitates; mentally he compares the king of legendary fame to the Austrian Emperor, and his patriotism bursts forth anew. In a moment he is off to the task that he believed sincerely to be right. Thus once again in that moment of indecision Pippa all unconsciously has influenced a life; possible on a lower level than previously, yet just as truly has she influenced it.

Night is at hand. Pippa lingers yet a little while; she would not shorten her one precious day by a single minute. Three separate times she has imagined herself to be different individuals; lastly now she longs to be the good Bishop of Asolo, and to share in his service to God. Her footsteps lead her past his home that perchance she may glimpse him. Within is the Bishop in conference with his accomplice who has aided him in the murder of his brother. At this very moment he is plotting a means for the removal of his brother's child, who has become an encumberance to him. This child is none other than Pippa herself. At this critical moment, when Pippa's own fate is resting in the balance, she passes singing that lovely nature lyric so fitting to her mood at the close of day:

"Overhead the tree-tops meet, --
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet;
There was nought above me -- nought below,
My childhood had not learned to know:
For what are the voices of birds
Ay -- and of beasts, -- but words, our words,
Only so much more sweet?
The knowledge of that with my life begun!
But I had so near made out the sun,
And counted your stars the seven and one,
Like the fingers of my hand:
Nay I could all but understand
Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges;
And just when out of her soft fifty changes
No unfamiliar face might overlook me --
Suddenly God took me." (1)

God's love is more real than all nature to her. This element of faith in the reality of God seems to touch the heart of the

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 144

unholy Bishop impelling him in his moment of doubt to act from a sense of Godliness rather than from the guilty greed which previously controled him.

Here in these four specific illustrations of Pippa's influence, do we find convincing evidence that every life is exerting some kind of unconscious influence over those who cross its path. In each case that we have mentioned regarding Pippa's influence we find that this influence is strongly for the good. Such could not be, if her own life were not entirely good and pure.

Sunset is gone and the darkness of night creeps over the earth. Pippa's day is ended, and we see her back in that little room from whence she started so happy that morning. Tomorrow she will be just Pippa "who winds silk." As she prepares for bed we see her in that close intimacy, when one believes one is alone. Her day has been bright and happy, and she has loved every minute of it; but Pippa is of the type that think deeply. All day she has imagined herself this one and that, and after all might not it be possible to influence them in just a slight way? How near has she really come to Ottima and the rest, near in the sense of her personality having even the slightest effect for good or evil over them?

> "Now, one thing I should really like to know
> How near, I even might approach all these.
> I only fancied being, this long day
> -- Approach, I mean, so as to touch them -- so
> As to . . . in some way . . . move them -- if you please,
> Do good or evil to them some slight way." (1)

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 145.

With much thought she ponders the idea, attempting to find a satisfactory answer to her question. Finally she rests her mind by the thought that perhaps the nearest she will ever come to touching their lives is through her silk, which may perchance serve them in some way:

> "For instance, if I wind
> Silk tomorrow, my silk may bind
> And border Ottima's cloak's hem --
> Ah me, and my important part with them,
> This morning's hymn half promised when I rose!
> True in some sense or other, I suppose,
> Though I passed by them all, and felt no sign." (1)

The most beautiful inference is Pippa's total unawareness of the actual life of these people and of just how much her own life has done for them. She never deliberately attempts to influence anyone; she is too simple, humble, and immature to believe that she could, even if she tried. On the other hand, she lives her own life to the fullest according to her limitations, and trusts God to know and understand. It is in this faith that she offers him her evening prayer and sleeps.

Pippa is a character dear to the heart of every reader: her diligence, faithfulness, and industry separate her from that common group of silk winders as one who can be depended upon and trusted. The truth, goodness, and moral purity of her inner life have their lasting effect upon the faith of woman in the moral integrity of her sex. Her sensitive spiritual nature reaches out to God with utmost faith, holding to the ultimate good in all humanity. Her keen imaginative

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 145.

powers lead fancy forth to play at will where in reality she may not follow. Her appreciation of the relative values in life and love warrant faith in the ideal. Her cheerful nature and jubilant spirits liken her to a song-bird and a ray of sunshine. Lastly, that unconscious influence which such a simple life as Pippa's may exert, bears in upon our minds the relative importance in life of seemingly unimportant personalities.

Mildred: Browning's "Juliet," or the Girl Who "Was So Young."

I. Act I: Lady Mildred, a Child of Fourteen:-
   A. Orientation of Mildred:-
      1. Mildred, the Parentless child
      2. Individuality of Mildred
      3. Family relationships and brother's affection
   B. Mildred's relationship with Henry Mertoun:-
      1. First innocent love
      2. Secret meetings
      3. Outcome of this love
      4. Request for marriage
   C. Mildred and Guendolen:-
      1. Characters contrasted
      2. Sympathetic understanding

II. Act II: Lady Mildred's Maturity:-
   A. Gerard's discovery and disclosure to Tresham
   B. Tresham's attitude:-
      1. Faith in Mildred and love for her
      2. Wounded pride and honor
   C. Mildred and Tresham:-
      1. Her confession
      2. Loyalty to Henry
      3. Self-condemnation
   D. Mildred and Guendolen:-
      1. Her confession and excuse
      2. Guendolen's plan of escape

III. Act III: Lady Mildred's Death:-

A. Tresham and Mertoun:-

1. Discovery of truth concerning Mildred

2. The forgiveness

3. Double tragedy

B. Mildred and Tresham:-

1. The forgiveness

2. The renewed avowal of love

3. The tragic death.

"A Blot in the 'Scutcheon" is the tragedy in which Browning has placed his character Mildred, a girl whom we have chosen to term Browning's "Juliet." Mildred Tresham is the younger sister of the Earl of Tresham, who is not only her brother but her guardian. The Earl of Tresham is typically English. He is an earl of the first rank, of noble parentage running true to eighteenth century type. He has the heritage of noble name and unsullied reputation, which he prizes more highly than his vast estates. Moreover, he is the type of man who will endeavor to maintain the heritage of honor which is his, even in the end at the cost of his own life.

The circumstance of life in which the author has placed his character Mildred is far too real to seem acted. Love is the supreme emotion. It finds its complication in the form of an uncompromising code of honor. Mildred, when first introduced to us, is a mere child, a young girl;

"... whose hair fell loose on either side." (1)

The bud of womanhood had not yet burst its sheath and blossomed forth. She is living a sheltered life in the home of her brother, whose fraternal care becomes that combined love of father, mother, and brother; for she has never known other love than his and Guendolen's

(1) Browning's Complete Poems, Student's Cambridge Edition, p. 221.

"What's to say
May be said briefly. She has never known
A mother's care; I stand for father too." (1)

Mildred is very young, a mere wisp of a child, with the slender beauty and youth that become a girl of fourteen. Shining curls, radiant with the luster of pure gold; a slight form whose very carriage denotes grace and charm of person; clear-cut features softened only by the soft white skin that covered them, and eyes that seem a bit too old for one so young in years. Browning would thus hint at a mental and emotional maturity, that shows itself in her later conduct.

"Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems --
You cannot know the good and tender heart,
Its girl's trust and its woman's constancy,
How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,
How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free
As light where friends are -- how imbued with lore
The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet
The . . . one might know I talked of Mildred -- thus
We brothers talk!" (2)

Mildred with all her beauty and charm becomes the center of his thoughts and affections. He, because of his double responsibility, -- that of father and brother, -- has come to be even more fond of her than is the average brother.

So Mildred has grown into girlhood in the sheltered home of her brother, whose estate joins that of the Earl

(1) Browning's Complete Poems, Student's Cambridge Edition, p. 218.
(2) Ibid., p. 218.

of Mertoun. Chance meetings have brought the young people together. Mertoun has seen the simple beauty of this girl Mildred and has grown to love her. There springs up between them that first innocent love of youth, born from mutual admiration, which slowly grows into a deeper love. Mertoun cannot do without Mildred, yet because of her extreme youth he dares not ask Tresham for her hand in marriage, and, what is more, he dares not court her openly. Mertoun, thus deprived of the customary way of seeing Mildred, resorts to the age old trick of secrecy. Mildred is the innocent child-girl who is lost in the newness of her experience; she loves for loves sake, and continues to be lost in love. She is totally unaware, in the beginning of their secret intimacy, as to the importance of the thing she is doing. She is loved, if not too much, unwisely, and she returns this love with a wholeheartedness which is beautiful but tragic. Then comes that moment of consciousness in the heart of Mildred which places innocent girlhood forever in the past. The bud of womanhood has burst its sheath. She stands now at the dawn of maturity where her sense of womanhood condemns her act.

Here we have the most natural outcry of the human soul, when it comes to the point of understanding. Nymphlike, she has danced care free to love's music; lived it and breathed it into her very soul, believing, trusting, but not understanding it. When to a sensitive soul like Mildred's there comes the harsh reality of such love we can expect nothing

different from that which Browning has so realistically depicted in the words he has put into the mouth of his character. Once Mildred has come to the sense of her "sin," as she terms it, she awakens in Mertoun his true manhood. He realizes his duty toward her, and with a resolution strengthened by the knowledge of what is he summons his courage and goes to the Earl of Tresham, making known his request for the hand of The Earl's sister. Yet he tactfully avoids any inference of former acquaintance with Mildred other than the casual acquaintanceship which would exist from the fact of adjoining estates.

Thus he hopes to gain permission to woo and win her, and so, under the cover of conventionality, forever hide the past. Mertoun returns to Mildred, happy in the promise of an interview with her; but he has failed to discern the real character of the girl he loves. Mildred's awakened womanhood rebels at the proposed plan and leads to difficulties. Straightforward, she asks him what kind of girl he thinks her to be. Innocence has lead her thus far, but her very soul rebels at deceit. She refuses to assume the chastity and purity of a virgin, when within her heart she knows such an assumption to be false. Mertoun attempts to quiet her with the thought that it will all so soon be over, and they may then continue to love each other as before; but in anguish of heart she cries,

"Over?
Oh, what is over? what must I live through

> And say, ' 'tis over'? Is our meeting over?
> Have I received in presence of them all
> The partner of my guilty love -- with brow
> Trying to seem a maiden's brow -- with lips
> Which make believe that when they strive to form
> Replies to you and tremble as they strive,
> It is the nearest ever they approached
> A stranger's . . . Henry, yours that stranger's
> . . . lip --
> With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that is . . .
> Ah God, some prodigy of thine will stop
> This planned piece of deliberate wickedness
> In its birth even! " (1)

With the newly awakened womanhood, in Mildred, there comes a sudden burst of moral courage. She refuses to go through with a ceremony, which to her would be so hypocritical. Rather would she face her shame and sin, and in her heart, know that she is sincere.

> "I
> Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by heart,
> But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful story,
> . . ." (2)

Here the personality of Mertoun asserts itself in a selfish way. He urges Mildred to keep her sin a secret, because his honor as well as hers is involved, and because this is not a situation which she must face alone: he has loved her, and he still loves her. Here Mildred clings to what seems to be her last hope, his love for her. If he still truly loves her nothing else really matters. She is led to accept his plea of youth, and passionate love

(1) Browning's Complete Poems, Student's Cambridge Edition, p. 221.
(2) Ibid., p. 221.

for her, and her courage rises with his in the confidence that all will yet be well with them. Mertoun goes, it is not safe for him to remain: she is alone; here we feel the bitterness of her struggle with herself. For a moment love conquers her doubt and shame and fear. She is thinking of life from a larger viewpoint. Custom is no longer her criterion by which she tests and condemns her act; but, at least momentarily, she comes to feel that life and love are greater than all else, and that in the last analysis she is not to be severely blamed for that of which she was ignorant.

> "Oh, I'll believe him every word!
> I was so young, I loved him so, I had
> No mother, God forgot me, and I fell.
> There may be pardon yet: . . ." (1)

In her moment of need Mildred experiences a source of comfort and help in Guendolen. Here there exists a relationship and influence which become, by their very nature, beautiful. In Guendolen we have the antithesis of Mildred. She is older and more mature in her thinking, with a settled outlook on life and a keener insight into it. She loves, but prosaicly. In fact Guendolen is much the type of person who does all the expected things in life. Yet in the very nature of a life one would be inclined to term commonplace Browning has discovered two rare virtues, courage and friendliness. No doubt Guendolen loves Mildred as few cousins have loved each other; thus we can account for her sympathetic understanding of the situation and her desire to help when the occassion arises.

(1) Browning's Complete Poems, Student's Cambridge Edition, p. 222.

True to the actual experiences of life, one step leads to another, and soon the situation which might easily evolve itself becomes more complex. Gerard, the old gardner and trusted servant, has discovered Mertoun, as evening after evening he has climbed to the casement window. After a long debate with his conscience, he feels duty bound to pass on his knowledge to Tresham. Tresham hears him to a close with no outward show of feeling, but once he is alone he is writhing under the sense of an outraged family honor, an honor which he has cherished even above his wealth. There are, however, instincts stronger than any sense of honor, which assert themselves. His fraternal love and faith hold him. He will hear it from her own lips or he will not believe it. He loves her and trusts her, and Gerard's story seems incredible to him.

Having sent for Mildred, he awaits her entrance. Softly she comes in, and, closing the door behind her, waits for him to speak. She is prepared to speak the truth. With a touching delicacy and tenderness, he assists her in her confession. She never once shows any tendency to brazen the situation out. With that simple straightforwardness which has characterized her throughout, she meets his questions. One thing only she refuses to disclose -- her lover's name. Here we feel the strong influence of a medieval code of honor, and so, to a certain degree, commend Mildred for her stand. She places the blame on no one but herself, and courageously invokes the

punishment her brother may adjudge fitting to the situation. But Tresham loves his sister too much to blame; rather he would plan a means of marriage whereby all might be for the greatest good of those involved and yet save his reputation. One and only one thing does Tresham request, namely, that she refuse to see Mertoun on the morrow. This is the one thing Mildred refuses to do, and consequently trouble arises. Tresham fails to understand; he has trusted his sister completely this far, but now he feels her unworthy of his future confidence. In anger he terms her a common wanton, and blasts her before the eyes of Austin and Guendolen. He conceives of Mildred as willing to sell all remaining honor and betray one so innocent as the Earl Mertoun.

Firmly does Mildred hold to her refusal to disclose the lover's name. Her sense of loyalty is uppermost; not even in the supreme crisis when her very womanhood is taken from her will she yield and defend herself. This to me is one of the strongest proofs of the real character of Mildred. She is true and pure, with a sense of honor and moral integrity; and, although she innocently has committed one sin, she refuses to become the moral type one would expect to find her.

Here in the crisis of the drama does Browning find occassion to make even more strong the virtue of Guendolen, as she stands by Mildred when most in need. To her, Browning has given the mature womanly understanding which sees into the situation far enough to realize that Mildred's lover and

Mertoun are one. She with Austin's help would have averted the tragedy by her tact and loving insight into human nature. Mildred comes to trust Guendolen as only one who needs help can trust a friend; she finds in her a real confidant:

> "O Guendolen, I love you!
> (Guen.) Yes: and 'love'
> Is a short word that says so very much!
> It says that you confide in me." (1)

Mildred does confide in Guendolen, all save the name of her lover; that she leaves Guendolen to guess, and the latter guesses rightly. Over and over she sobs out her guilt, to be understood by Guendolen, who bids her cling to the hope that she and Austin will yet be able to make things all right for the lovers.

However Tresham must be taken into account. His anger has for the time being left him enraged, so that his one thought is vengeance at any cost: he must clear the blot from the 'scutcheon. There is nothing but tragedy to follow. Tresham overtakes Mertoun as he enters the garden, but because of his disguise he fails to recognize him. At first, and before there is time for an explanation, he challenges him and mortally wounds him. As he lies dying, he confesses the whole truth -- how, as a mere boy, he did the wrong, and then took the only means he knew to correct it. Mertoun's dying plea for forgiveness strikes a sympathetic note in Tresham, so that the two men are knit together as they could

(1) Browning's Complete Poems, Student's Cambridge Edition, p. 226.

not otherwise have been. Mertoun's last words are for Mildred, a reaffirmation of his love for her, and a pathetic plea that she die too and be with him. The world has been heartless in its treatment of them, custom has damned their love, but God will understand.

Meantime, Mildred, in fear and consternation, awaits Mertoun's coming. When he is delayed, doubts creep into her mind: she wonders if she has done the right thing in refusing to tell her Brother; she questions Henry's love, and declares life worthless without him; she would rather die. In short, she works herself up to such a tense emotional state that she welcomes any message, if it will but cause her to cease thinking. Tresham enters; he is at a loss to know how to bring Mertoun's message to her. First he speaks tenderly, urging her to forgive his cruelty of yesterday; then he points to the empty scabbard, and Mildred knows the truth. Gently he tells her all that has taken place in the garden, and Mildred, broken-hearted, collapses -- soon to die and join her lover. But in her death there comes that bigness of heart and magnanimity of spirit that was characteristic of her life. She is willing not only to forgive but to bless Tresham. She is happy in the fact that a bond of love exists between Mertoun and Tresham. Death comes to her and peace rests upon her features. Tresham's death follows, due to his own deliberate taking of life. He has given his life for the life he took.

The pathetic beauty of the last scene, the tense emotion, and the death that conquers all brings the drama to a close with Mildred still the character we have loved. Instinctively we add Mildred to the long list of ill-fated heroines, and feel that life somehow has robbed us of a beautiful character.

Someone has said that Browning has so far overdone his character Mildred that even Nature herself would rebel at the irrational combination of good and evil. I cannot feel that this statement is true. We have shown how Mildred possessed much of the good and beautiful and little of the evil.

In the general trend of human experience one is rarely consistently all good or all bad. Mildred was human, and thus this applies to her. Yet in view of her tender age and her constant plea, "I was so young, I has no mother, God forgot me," one feels that the world has been harsh to her. Custom is a severe master; when one steps beyond the conventional, the world is unforgiving.

To me Mildred is a beautiful illustration of Browning's tolerance. He has gone beyond the surface of things, refusing to see them as they seem but rather as they are. In the words of Tresham, he has stated his own feeling in the situation:

> " . . . I saw through
> The troubled surface of his crime and yours
> A depth of purity immovable;
> . . ." (1)

(1) Browning's Complete Poems, Student's Cambridge Edition, p. 230.

Browning realizes that God alone has the right to judge, to punish, and to condemn.

Colombe: The Conflict Between Conscience and Desire.

Introduction:

A. Colombe of Ravestein

1. The type: the care-free girl

2. Her individuality

B. Colombe: Duchess of Juliers and Cleves

1. Death of Duke and inheritance of title

2. Indifference toward responsibility

3. Weakness of claim to title, rightful claimant

4. Rebellious attitude toward present situation

I. Awakening Sense of Interest and Responsibility:

A. Causative Factors:

1. Loyalty of subjects

2. Valence's petition

3. Prince Berthold's claim

B. Corresponding Results:

1. Temporary surrender of Ducal Crown

2. Valence's anger at trick; loyal support

3. Colombe's momentary deliberation

4. Refusal of Berthold's claim

5. Stubborn defense of position

II. Complicating Factors in the Rôle of Duchess;

A. Subjective element:

1. Her knowledge that his claim is just

2. Her weakness and willingness to surrender

B. Objective element

1. Valence's refusal to yield without proof

2. Valence's declaration of Berthold's love.

3. Valence's declaration of his own love

III. Mental Conflict of Colombe:

A. Desire over against conscience

B. Possible choices:

1. Berthold's offer of marriage and power

2. Valence's offer of love and obscurity

C. Futility of life without love

D. Final decision to accept love and surrender power

"Colombe's Birthday" introduces to us a new and somewhat different type of woman from any here-to-fore considered. Colombe, Duchess of Juliers and Cleves, is the outstanding character of the entire drama. She it is who carries the reader through the play by her own momentum, for she is the center of action or moving force of the drama.

There had been trouble over the rightful claimant to the dukedom during the lifetime of Colombe's father, and so with careful foresight he has shielded her from all unpleasantness by placing her in the quiet home at Ravestein. Here amid the beauty and quiet of nature her childhood was spent. Here she grew and developed into happy carefree girlhood, much like other girls. She was beautiful in form and figure, with masses of long hair wreathed about her head; deep blue eyes, filled with the sparkle of youth, a brow that knew no line of worry or of care. In truth she was nature's perfect flower, with the blush of maidenhood tinting each delicate petal.

When next we see Colombe, we observe her in the rôle of Duchess of Cleves and Juliers. Death has robbed her of her father, the Duke, who upon his death has left to her the questionable title to his dukedom, which is generally known to belong to Prince Berthold, her cousin. Roughly and unwillingly is she transported from her home at Ravestein to the palace at Juliers. She has been here a year, and it is now her birthday morning. One year she has held

undisputedly the title of Duchess, yet she was so young and lovely that we are lead to suppose she little knew or cared for title or possessions; rather her heart has been hungry for her old home and for the chance to live and grow as other girls she knew. Even the rumor of Prince Berthold's coming to claim her title seems not at first to arouse her interest:

> "There, she's no Duchess, she's no anything
> More than a young maid with the bluest eyes:" (1)

and again:

> ". . . and there's she
> Wreathing her hair, a song between her lips,
> With just the faintest notion possible
> That some such claimant earns a livelihood
> About the world, by feigning grievances --
> Few pay the story of, but grudge its price,
> And fewer listen to, a second time." (2)

The right to the title, which by Salic Law was never hers, is now claimed definitely by her cousin Prince Berthold. He has on this very day sent a letter to Colombe stating his rightful claim, which later he will demand in person. The message falls into the hands of her few remaining loyal courtiers, who, by the very nature of its contents, are loath to bring it to her. Subsequently they are arguing among themselves as to who shall perform the unpleasant task when Valence, bearing a petition from Cleves to her Highness, is granted permission to see her, provided he will also lay this letter at her feet:

> ". . . here's a document
> 'Tis some one's duty to present her Grace --
> I say, not mine, -- these say, not their -- such points

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 232;
(2) Camb. Ed., p. 232.

Have weight at court. Will you relieve us all
And take it? -- Just say, 'I am bidden lay
This paper at the Duchess' feet!'" (1)

It is her birthday morning; but only momentarily do we feel the sparkle of mirth that is befitting to the occasion. Instead, as her attendants prepare her for the Court, she is quiet and meditative; her mind returns to the day, just a year ago, when she was snatched from all that seemed worthwhile to her and placed here in this miserable situation. In the few moments that she is alone before the courtiers arrive we come to understand her pent up emotion. She longs to be free from all of this, which, after all, she had no part in choosing; but she realizes that she cannot be: she is here, and here she must stay. With the thought of a possible dethronement, she becomes bitter and stubborn, her will asserts itself, and she refuses to become a mere object to be placed or displaced at the hands of others. No, since she is here, she is determined to face whatever may be before her:

"Well, sunshine's everywhere and summer too.
Next year 'tis the old place again, perhaps --
The water-breeze again, the birds again.
-- It cannot be! It is too late to be!
What part had I, or choice in all of it?
Hither they brought me; I had not to think
Nor care, concern myself with doing good
Or ill, my task was just -- to live -- to live,
And, answering ends there was no need explain,
To render Juliers happy -- so they said.
All could not have been falsehood! Some was love,
And wonder and obedience. I did all
They looked for: Why then cease to do it now?
Yet this is to be calmly set aside,
And, -- ere next birthday's dawn, for aught I know,

(1) Camb. Ed., p.234.

Things change, a claimant may arrive, and I . . .
It cannot, nor it shall not be! His right?
Well then, he has the right, and I have not,
But who bade all of you surround my life
And close its growth up with your Ducal crown
Which, plucked off rudely, leaves me perishing?
I could have been like one of you, -- loved, hoped,
Feared, lived and died like one of you -- but you
Would take that life away and give me this,
And I will keep this! I will face you! Come!" (1)

With this outcry of her soul there comes a newer awakened sense of her responsibility if she is to fill successfully the rôle of duchess. So putting her thoughts aside, she goes to the court room, to be greeted by her subjects on her birthday morning and to hear, if any, their petitions. As she views the group before her she questions their loyalty to her; but as she moves among them, receiving their congratulations and homage, her faith rises; certainly this group is loyal to her cause:

"I have been over-fearful. These are few;
But these, at least, stand firmly -- these are mind."
(2)

Since there is even a small group that is faithful, she will endeavor to measure up to their faith and be, in truth, their Duchess.

"I lived, a girl, one happy leisure year:
Let me endeavor to be Duchess now!" (3)

All is now ready, with self desire forgotten she awaits the business of the court, in royal fashion. Sir Gilbert advances and presents Valence to Her Highness. He in turn

(1) Camb.Ed., p. 235.
(2) Ibid., p. 236.
(3) Ibid., p. 236.

first lays his own petition at her feet, and then the message he has been hired to bring to her. The presentation of the petition of Cleves for the readjustment of its economic problems falls into insignificance in the light of the message representing Berthold's claim. Most interesting is the attitude of Colombe. Just at the time when she is resolved in her heart to face the situation in which she has so unwillingly been placed comes this new and staggering blow that she seems so unprepared to face. Her response is almost childish in its pathetic appeal to know the "why" of all of this. There, mastering herself slightly, she resorts to cold sarcasm, in which she reiterates that she never wanted the ducal crown, much less this situation which confronts her at the very moment when she has decided to make the most of her opportunity by giving herself to the people as a Duchess should. She will have none of it; with utmost contempt she lays aside her coronet and thanks God that she is now simply Colombe of Ravestein.

"What have I done to you? Your deed or mine
Was it, this crowning me? I gave myself
No more a title to your homage, no,
Than church-flowers, born this season, wrote the words
In the saint's-book that sanctified them first.
For such a flower, you plucked me; will, you erred --
Well, 'twas a weed; remove the eye-sore quick!
But should you not remember it has lain
Steeped in the candles' glory, palely shrined,
Nearer God's Mother than most earthly things?
-- That if 't be faded, 'tis with prayer's sole breath--
That the one day it boasted, was God's day?
Still, I do thank you! Had you used respect,
Here might I dwindly to my last white leaf,

Here lose life's latest freshness, which even yet
May yield some wandering insect rest and food:
So, fling me forth, and -- all is best for all!
. . . Prince Berthold, who art Julier's Duke, it
seems --
The King's choice and the Emperor's,and the Pope's --
Be mine, too! Take this People! Tell not me
Of rescripts, precedents, authorities,
-- But take them,from a heart that yearns to give!
Find out their love, -- I could not; find their fear, --
I would not; find their like, -- I never shall,
Among the flowers!
Colombe of Ravestein
Thanks God she is no longer Duchess here!" (1)

However, she is not so free to do as she would, for there are those who object to her rash act, and of these Valence becomes the spokesman. In anger he condemns Guibert, who has made him the innocent victim to deliver such a message, and then has bidden Her Highness give him leave to speak. Leave granted, Valence attempts to make clear the fact that he knew nought of the content of the letter, and that for himself and the people he represents they are her true subjects. Here we can begin to see a new phase of Colombe. In anger and childishness she has acted hastily, but even so soon comes a tinge of regret. The staunch avowal of such loyalty has touched her pride; certainly she would want to be Duchess of such a people as these. Momentarily there is the first flash of mental conflict: shall she cast aside her crown and with it yield what power and influence may yet be hers? Or shall she replace the crown and determinedly fight for it? Knowing that Cleves is loyal, she dares replace the crown, defy the claim of Berthold, and, with Valence pledged to her personal

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 236.

service, begin the fight for power:

> "Then I remain Cleves' Duchess! Take you note,
> While Cleves but yields one subject of this stamp,
> I stand her lady till she waves me off!
> For her sake, all the Prince claims I withhold;
> Laugh at each menace; and, his power defying,
> Return his missive with its due contempt!" (1)

Nevertheless it is one thing to say and quite another thing to do. Colombe's path to achievement is to be blocked by some unforeseen circumstances. Prince Berthold has no desire to yield his claim, nor does he desire to wage open warfare to secure it; rather he resorts to a more subtle manner of approach, namely, an offer of marriage to the Duchess, an offer which, if successful, will unite her realm to his.

Colombe is alone with Valence. Over and over does she state the facts which are proof positive that the title rightly belongs to Berthold and that his claim is just. She has lost the momentary bravery which was hers so recently. Now, weakened by introspection, she sees that much of the entire situation is due to her own wasted opportunities, through which she might have won the loyal support of all her subjects and thus prevented this feeling of alone-ness in the hour which she now admits she knew inevitably would come. Here we have again simple girlhood, with complete faith in others, and a frankness regarding her failure which is refreshing. How should she, the simple girl, whose childhood had been so completely shielded from knowledge of political affairs, be expected to know how to rule? Heartsick,

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 238.

she is ready to yield, to leave all, but pride prevents her: "What will others think of me, what will they say?" If only she may have time to rule a bit and then, seemingly from choice, to lay aside her power! In agony she pleads with Valence to stay the claim of Berthold.

This Valence does, by stating Colombe's defiance of his claim openly to Berthold and by challenging him to fight for it if he would secure it. Berthold, too much of a diplomat not to realize the futility of such means, leaves his written claim and goes away, only to return with offer of marriage to the Cuchess. This has been a never ending day to Colombe; hardly yet is it evening, but she seems to have lived a year. Girlhood's carefree ways are gone; worry, anxiety, and perplexity have matured her, so that even she recognizes the great change which has taken place:

> "This is indeed my birthday -- soul and body,
> Its hours have done on me the work of years." (1)

Even yet she has not come to realize the conflicting passions that are murmuring in her soul. Her desire for power has not reached its height and her passion for love is but a slumbering flame. She, all unknowingly, stands on the edge of a precipice and is about to throw herself headlong into the whirlpool of power and of love.

Valence meets Berthold as he returns at the evening appointment. He has not yet reported to Colombe his findings as he has gone thoroughly over the papers presented by

(1) Camb. Ed. p. 242.

Berthold as proof of his claim. But he knows the truth and admits it to Berthold, who bids him for a time forget it and instead offer Colombe his hand in marriage. Valence urges the question as to his love for her. Berthold dares to admit that love has no great concern for him. What is more, he bids him go immediately and carry his message to her. He goes, but with heavy heart; for he truly loves her, and he is unwilling to tempt her with this offer of Berthold's. Nevertheless he must tell her; but in so doing he dares to suggest that Berthold does not truly love her; rather he is offering her his fortune, his power, his worldly success. In his offer of marriage Colombe is quick to realize that here is a possible means of escape from the turmoil of political affairs, and even in accepting his offer she realizes her own growing ambition for power. At first she assumes the fact that he loves her, and even when Valence restates clearly that his offer of marriage contained no spoken word of love she dares to believe that his actions will prove that he loves her:

> "That he should love me!
> 'Loved' I did not say.
> * * *
> Not love me, sir?
> He scarce affirmed it.
> May not deeds affirm?" (1)

In a desperate effort to make her realize that Berthold's words are not love he declares that he himself loves, and therefore is able to discern between love and that which Berthold offers. Colombe never suspects that Valence is in love,

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 245.

much less in love with her. Her feminine curiosity is so aroused that she questions Valence regarding the lady he loves and if the lady knows that he loves her. When he admits that he dares not mention his love to her Colombe becomes the woman and advises him to make known his love to her, for she too cannot fail to love him. Finally, she even commands him to make known his love, to disclose the fact that she, Colombe, is the one he loves. With cold severity she dismisses the subject at hand and roughly brings him back to earth reminding him that they were discussing Prince Berthold's offer.

It is night, the birthday is almost ended; but the night of darkness and mental conflict seems never to be at an end. Colombe knows the hour is at hand when she must make her decision. There is within her consciousness that dream of power which she may yet realize if she is only able to retain her title. Berthold's offer of marriage affords a way of escape: if she should marry him, she may rise to the pinnacle of power for which she longs. But something else has happened to her: all unconsciously the desire for true love has been awakened within her. The mental conflict between the two newly awakened passions, power and love, is so intense that she cannot decide. Suddenly she discovers a way out: she will meet Berthold face to face and hear his proposal, and learn for herself whether or not he loves her.

Berthold rises to the occasion. He couched his proposal in words that would flatter the heart of any woman:

"You underrate yourself.
You are, what I, to be complete, must gain --
Find now, and may not find, another time." (1)

But she is too big to be tricked by his vain words, her heart seeks love; so in a straightforward way she puts her question, "Do you love me?" Berthold dares evade the issue:

"Your lineage I revere,
Honour your virtue, in your truth believe,
Do homage to your intellect, and bow
Before your peerless beauty." (2)

Even though the very heart of Colombe cry out for love, such a love as Valence may offer, she dares to ask for the terms of marriage with Berthold, to which he replies, "I will make you Empress, the first lady of the land." More subtle and more subtle becomes the temptation; we can hear her as she repeats the words to herself, "Earth's first woman," or "simple Lady of Ravestein again." With the intense struggle, she seeks for time:

"And when must I decide?" (3)

At this point in the plot the situation is heightened by the statement of a Courtier reminding her that if she should marry a subject she will forfeit her title. Thus any thought of marriage with Valence means absolute surrender; yet in her heart she realizes that marriage with him is the natural reward of his loving service. She must love him if she is to marry him. Here Browning has made Colombe feel the utter

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 248.
(2) Camb. Ed., p. 248.
(3) Camb. Ed., p. 248.

futility of a marriage without love. The thought of a loveless life with Berthold sends her heart back to Valence with a rush. There is now but a moment of indecision; love has conquored in her heart the baser desire for mere power. Conscience has been her true guide. Then and there on her birthday night she chooses Valence and obscurity to anything that Prince Berthold may offer. She has mastered self and come to believe in love as the one worthwhile thing in life:

"I take him, -- give up Juliers and the world!" (1)

Thus the mental conflict is at end; one brief day has brought so much to her. The psychological development of one passing from girlhood to womanhood, the struggle between conscience and desire lend remarkable insight into the real character of Colombe. She comes to live for us as the embodiment of the finer virtues of life, self-control, honesty, frankness, and love, as over against selfish desire for power and worldly influence.

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 250.

Domizia: A Study in the Futility of Retaliation.

Introduction: Brief Epitome of Story.

I. Domizia's Desire for Revenge:-
   A. The personality of Domizia
   B. Cause for revenge
   C. Motivating factors in revenge
   D. Florence the object of her revenge

II. Proposed Plan of Revenge:-
   A. Knowledge of political situation and leaders
   B. Choice of instrument of revenge
      1. Reason for her choice
      2. Skillful use of her personality to influence Luria
      3. Utter disregard for personality
      4. Selfish encouragement of Luria
      5. Complete faith in him

III. Ultimate Failure of Plan:-
   A. Failure to consider all possible factors
   B. Her misjudgment of Luria
   C. The change in her own viewpoint

IV. Final Conviction as to Value of Revenge:
   A. Luria's influence
   B. Retaliation superceded by:-
      1. Justice
      2. Forgiveness - benevolence

3. Ability to forget

4. Love

General Summary:

The feudal strife occurring between city-states of Northern Italy during the fifteenth century serves as the background for the tragedy "Luria." The drama is divided into five acts, each respectively representing a division of that one day which marks the long expected encounter between the forces of Florence and of Pisa for the purpose of ending war. Luria, a Moorish mercenary, successfully leads the Florentine troops to victory after having been aided by his firm friend Husain and spurred on to action by Domizia, a noble Florentine Lady, who desires revenge, and finds in Luria the possible hope for securing it. Braccio, Commissary of the Republic of Florence, and Puccio, the general whom Luria has superseded, are suspicious of Luria's power and therefore falsify sufficient evidence to demand a trial for treason against Luria. Luria has been warned of this trickery by the Pisan General, but because of his love for Florence refuses to heed the warning or later to use force to save himself. Rather in the end, through his love for Domizia, he shows her the futility of revenge, wins her to his viewpoint, and dies at his own hand victorious over his enemies.

Whereas Luria is the center of action in this tragedy, Domizia's desire to secure revenge through Luria makes her a potent factor in the development of the plot. Domizia is a lady of noble birth, the daughter of the Traversari, with the prestige and social advantages of such parentage. She is cultivated, refined, with a certain attractiveness of person about her, endowed with mental alertness and insight,

yet totally blinded by one all-absorbing passion, the desire for revenge. The cause of her revengeful spirit is found in the injustice done to her father and two brothers, Porzio and Berto, who have faithfully served Florence and in the end received death as their reward:

> "Old and trained, my sire
> Could bow down on his quiet broken heart,
> Die awe-struck and submissive, when at last
> The strange blow came for the expected wreath;
> And Porzio passed in blind bewilderment
> To exile, never to return, -- they say,
> Perplexed in his frank simple honest soul,
> As if some natural law had changed, -- how else
> Could Florence, on plain fact pronouncing thus,
> Judge Porzio's actions worthy such an end?
> But Berto, with the ever-passionate pulse,
> -- Oh that long night, its dreadful hour on hour,
> In which no way of getting his fair fame
> From their inexplicable charges free,
> Was found, save pouring forth the impatient blood
> To show its colour whether false or no!
> My brothers never had a friend like me
> Close in their need to watch the time, then speak,
> -- Burst with a wakening laughter on their dream,
> And show them what a simple task remained --
> To leave dreams, rise, and punish in God's name
> The City wedded to its wickedness --
> . . . " (1)

It is difficult to determine the underlying motive (or motives) that has prompted this spirit of revenge in Domizia. One might suggest that it was due either to her great love for her brothers and the overwhelming grief caused by their death, or to an inherent sense of an injustice having been committed, which in turn has bred a deep hatred for Florence and the desire to make those who have been directly responsible for it suffer their punishment. The latter seems the

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 303.

more probable in the light of Domizia's future action. Thus blinded by grief at the loss of her family, she has permitted her mind to dwell upon the facts of their death until the desire for revenge against Florence, her native state, becomes so intense that she actually perpetrates a plan for the securing of this revenge:

> "Well, Florence, shall I reach thee, pierce thy heart
> Through all its safeguards? Hate is said to help--
> Quicken the eye, invigorate the arm;
> And this my hate, made up of many hates,
> Might stand in scorn of visible instrument,
> And will thee dead: yet do I trust it not.
> Nor man's devices nor Heaven's memory
> Of wickedness forgot on earth so soon,
> But they own nature, -- hell and thee I trust,
> To keep thee constant in that wickedness,
> Where my revenge may meet thee." (1)

Domizia is not unfamiliar with the political situation in Florence. She has not only a knowledge of the actual situation which exists between Florence and her enemy Pisa but she is acquainted with the civic leaders of her state. Carefully has she watched for each new expression of their plan and sensed in the securing of a mercenary commander to lead the troops of Florence a possible means of revenge. Her entire plan for revenge denotes a very careful survey of the situation, an understanding of the leaders, an analysis of their past conduct with a hope of determining their future behaviour, and above all an understanding of the psychology of fear. Her conclusions are accurately drawn. She has so

(1) Camb. Ed., p.303.

carefully weighed the past situations and analyzed the motives underlying them that with a marked degree of accuracy she foresees what will be their attitude toward Luria if he is successful in battle. He inturn will receive some such fate as have her brothers; for one who is powerful enough to suppress Pisa is dangerous to the future safety of their political position.

The mind of Domizia works rapidly and, to a degree, rather cleverly. She has made her deductions as to Luria's probable fate, but she sees in him elements which might suggest difficulty in the success of this plan. He is a Moor of strong character and ability, and Florence is not his native land; therefore he will not willingly stand trial at her hand without opposition. If he opposes the Florentine officials he has sufficient support and loyalty in the armies to defeat them. Once she has reached this opinion, she has faith enough in her own powers to believe that she can successfully carry forth this scheme; -- so --

> "She who remembering her whole House's fall,
> That nest of traitors strangled in the birth,
> Now labors to make Luria (poor device
> As plain) the instrument of her revenge!" (1)

Her next move is to win the confidence and friendship of Luria. By the very nature of her social position this becomes possible, aided as she is by her false willingness to serve as a spy for Florence for the purpose of procuring data that will convict Luria of treason. Furthermore she resorts to a very skillful but subtle use of her own personality to

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 301.

influence Luria. She knows her attractiveness and capitalizes it, thus creating a situation where his men say of Luria, "He loves that woman."

But Domizia has no such thought; she has no regard for his personality or his friendship; her only desire is to play successfully upon his emotions sufficiently to produce a sense of self-satisfaction, so that when she finally suggests the true reward which Florence has for him there will arise within him a sense of the injustice done him strong enough to warrant his revenge.

Constantly she encourages Luria. In well couched sentences she refers to his ability as a leader, his past success, his present opportunity to come forth victorious, and the resultant affection and praise of Florence for one who has served so bravely:

> "Well, you will triumph for the past enough.
> Whatever be the present chance; no service
> Falls to the ground with Florence: she awaits
> Her savior, will receive him fittingly." (1)

> "That she is ever at his ear to prompt
> Inordinate conceptions of his worth,
> Exorbitant belief in worth's reward,
> And after, when sure disappointment follows,
> Proportionable rage at such a wrong --" (2)

Having, as she believes, built up within Luria a sense of his own worth and his fitting reward, she skillfully plays her next move: she suggests the reward which in all probability will be his, namely, the future distrust of those who until

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 301.
(2) Ibid., p. 301.

now have trusted his power.

Domizia has complete faith in Luria. She has studied his military powers, she is confident of his victory, and, thinking that she has successfully analyzed his temperament with sufficient accuracy to predict his attitude to his fate, she awaits confidently the chance to aid him in his revenge against Florence and thus balance her own score against the city that has so treated her family:

> "So, when the stranger cheated of his due
> Turns on thee as his rapid nature bids,
> Then, Florence, think, a hireling at the throat
> For the first outrage, think who bore thy last,
> Yet mutely in forlorn obedience died!" (1)

> "Thank God and take revenge!
> Hurl her own force against the city straight!" (2)

Even so, in the vace of what seemed the most careful analysis of the situation, Domizia's plan of revenge is an ultimate failure. True she has succeeded in placing Luria where he may either yield or fight, but she has not gained revenge. There are two decided reasons for this. First, Domizia, in spite of her "clear fine intellect" and insight into human nature, has failed to judge rightly the situation as it actually turned out to be. She judged with accuracy the baser nature of those in power:

> "I knew the Florence that could doubt their faith,
> Must needs mistrust a stranger's -- dealing them
> Punishment, would deny him his reward." (3)

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 303.
(2) Ibid., p. 306.
(3) Ibid., p. 309.

Yet this was but half. Secondly, she has failed to understand the noble, sensitive, and true nature of Luria. She judged him in terms of herself, and dared to believe that if necessary he would seek revenge:

> "And I believed, the shame they bore and died,
> He would not bear, but live and fight against --
> Seeing he was of other stuff than they." (1)

There is in the earlier part of the drama a marked inability on the part of Domizia to see the "man" Luria: her knowledge of him seems but to concern his military habits; she conceives him to be as force and power, controlled by a military sagacity which will serve both his and her future end. She has failed to allow for the fact of his inner nature, which is unselfish, generous, tender, loving. This aspect of his personality to a large degree has become closely attached to the finer cultural and aesthetic aspects of Florentine society. In the moment when she seems to have forgotten her desire for revenge and urges Luria but to seek justice and forestall vengeance against Florence, we sense a change in the life of Domizia. It is the effect of this change in her own nature which reveals to us the finer aspects of her personality. The revelation of this finer soul is due to Luria's influence and Domizia's susceptibility to it. Domizia has come to the point where she realizes the futility of revenge, and coming to this point the person in her that sought revenge dies and a new Domizia is born:

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 309.

"Domizia, whom you knew,
Performed her task, and died with it. 'T is I,
Another woman, you have never known." (1)

Standing there in the light of her new nature, she seems incapable of realizing the importance she once placed on her desire for revenge. It was all in all to her, but now it seems as nought in the light of the new phase of Luria's personality which she longs to understand fully:

"How inexhaustibly the spirit grows!
One object, she seemed erewhile born to reach
With her whole energies and die content, --
So like a wall at the world's edge it stood,
With naught beyond to live for, -- is that reached? --
Already are new undreamed energies
Outgrowing under, and extending farther
To a new object; there's another world." (2)

It would seem that Luria had reached the height of his influence over Domezia when he has killed within her the passion for revenge; but this is not true. Something in the very frank, sincere nature of Luria makes Domizia willing to learn more of him and the ideals which govern his life. She realizes that there is a something she has just begun to sense:

"But -- leave you? -- More of you seems yet to reach:
I stay for what I just begin to see." (3)

The eyes that were blinded by revenge are opened to truth. She condemns her selfish impulse, and her disregard for others. This could not be if love were not born in her heart instead of hate. With this new love comes the sense of the

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 314.
(2) Ibid., p. 314.
(3) Ibid., p. 314.

divine justice, benevolence, forgiveness, and love. She has caught it from the soul of Luria, and with that larger faith she now urges Luria to trust in himself the things he has taught her to trust in him:

> /~You~/ "who have brought fresh stuff
> For us to mould, interpret and prove right, --
> New feeling fresh from God, which, could we know
> O' the instant, where had been our need of it?
> -- Whose life re-teaches us what life should be,
> What faith is, loyalty and simpleness,
> All, once revealed but taught us so long since
> That, having mere tradition of the fact, --
> Truth copied falteringly from copies faint, --
> The early traits all dropped away, -- we said
> On sight of faith like yours, 'So looks not faith
> We understand, described and praised before.'
> But still, the feat was dared; and though at first
> It suffered from our haste, yet trace by trace
> Old memories reappear, old truth returns,
> Our slow thought does its work, and all's reknown.
> Oh noble Luria! What you have decreed
> I see not, but no animal revenge,
> No brute-like punishment of bad by worse --
> It cannot be, the gross and vulgar way
> Traced for me by convention and mistake,
> Has gained that calm approving eye and brow!
> Spare Florence, after all! Let Luria trust
> To his own soul, he whom I trust with mine!" (1)

Thus our last view of Domizia is one where her finer nature has triumphed over her lower nature. She is a beautiful woman controlled by love rather than by hate.

Domizia becomes one of the most interesting of all Browning's women chiefly because her action in the drama is based on an ascending scale of character development rather than on a descending scale. This is a marked difference in Browning's treatment of the development of character; for in the main he adheres closely to two types in his treatment

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 315.

of his feminine characters: that static type of character which remains the same throughout the entire poem, such as Pippa, in "Pippa Passes"; or that retrogressive type which when introduced to the reader is tolerantly good but which before the poem is completed has passed through some moral experience of such a nature as to show retrogression rather than development of her character. In view of this fact, Domizia stands out as one of the most unusual of his character studies. One is introduced to her as a woman blinded by hatred and a sense of injustice which leads her to revenge even at the sacrifice of truth and honor. The readers realization of her keen intellect and forceful personality is followed by his regret because of the debasing end to which she is directing her every ounce of energy and because of her utter disregard for both friendship and personality. Yet there is within the personality of Domizia that one dominant trait, namely willingness to learn, or the fact that her mind is open to new convictions, which becomes the dynamic factor in her self-recovery. Thus brought under the influence of such a strong personality as Luria's the old revengeful nature slowly dies and is sloughed off, and in its place a new person, benevolent, just, kind, forgiving and loving, stands forth. Domizia has broken her chrysalis and come forth in new beauty.

Lucrezia: The Inhibiting Influence of a Selfish Wife.

I. Its Potentiality Foreshadowed by the Personality of Lucrezia

A. Physical appearance

1. Beauty

2. Charm

B. Character traits

1. Selfish

2. Self-centered

3. Egoistic

4. Unloving

II. Analysis of Its Significance to Andrea

A. Moral

1. In regard to honesty

2. In regard to self-respect

B. Artistic

1. The unfulfilled ideal

2. Wasted genius

III. Its Effect upon Andrea

A. Weakened Personality

B. Wasted talent

C. Morbid remorse

D. Forsaken love

In the poem "Andrea del Sarto," we find one of the most human of all Browning's characters, namely, Lucrezia. Her Browning has clearly depicted as the selfish, self-seeking, egoistic person. The poet seems to realize the important part that selfishness in its varied forms plays in the average life of an individual. He has in poetry taught again that great truth that "no man liveth unto himself alone." The entire poem is spent in evolving the influence of one's selfish nature over another person, whose weakness of will permits him to be victimized by this selfishness.

It is worth our while to consider the individuality of Lucrezia. We may see her as she stands there before him in the capacity of his model, beautiful beyond description,with a perfection of feature that is rare, crowned by a mass of loose golden hair. Physically she has all the beauty,grace, and charm that one can imagine ever having been interfused into one personality:

"You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!" (1)

Yet in this picture we feel that something is lacking. Physical beauty in and of itself becomes dull, formal, and uninteresting. We seek beyond the surface for those mental and moral traits, which, if there, would enhance the picture and vivify the personality of the character. But they are not there. Rather to her physical beauty Browning seems purposely to have added those unlovely attributes of character

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 347.

which tend to mar the physical beauty; for physical beauty soon fades and becomes mere marble molded into form when the fire of personality ceases to glow from within.

Andrea has permitted himself to be coerced into selling his moral integrity and his artistic soul. For Lucrezia's sake he has given up the opportunity that presented itself in the French Court; he even cowardly shrinks from meeting his associates, because of his broken promise to return. He has resorted to dishonesty, and has cheated his kind friend and patron, Francis I, of the money with which he had been entrusted for the purchase of works of art. He has allowed his parents to die of want that he might give the more to his wife.

But even greater than all this is the moral effect upon his profession. He recognizes his own superlative genius, and knows that from a standpoint of professional technique he far surpasses his colleagues. Yet there comes to him that deeper realization that there is a something lacking: they possess more than he, the faultless painter; wherefore in agony of heart he realizes that the soul is gone from him. He knows that they reach a goal that he can never reach, that in them burns a truer light of God than in himself, for there is still for them the challenge of the unattained. Rather has he wasted the genius that was his. There is nothing left him but that excruciating remorse that comes from an inner sense of failure, and this leads him often to despair.

The personality of Lucrezia, in spite of its undesirable traits, seems to be the stronger. In her subtle way she has molded and shaped him until he is no longer himself. She has taken advantage of his weakness; and on the other hand she has endured him while he has gratified her many wishes. If she had had any interest in the beautiful, she might well have incited him to a nobler work; but no, his work, his talent, even his native genius is but to her a potentiality for the satisfying of her selfish nature. Her scale of values never rises higher than those utilitarian values which contribute to her own happiness.

Has a personality like Lucrezia's any influence over the life of another? What is her influence upon Andrea? It is a rare incident in life to find two people of like nature together. Browning realized this and so by way of actual experience he has followed this truth. He has created Andrea as the faultless painter, one endowed with genius at its height, and with the soul of a true artist. There is within him at the start that burning passion to achieve; in time he is able to do all and more, he has reached absolute perfection in drawing:

"I do what many dream of all their lives, . . ." (1)

From the standpoint of art, Andrea del Sarto was a faultless painter. But he was also a weak-willed character. It fell his lot to love with passion a faithless woman. His natural

(1) Camb.Ed., p. 346.

weakness was doubled by the weakness engendered by his unconquorable passion. He would do anything for the woman he loved: he would ruin his life, his art, and his honor for his wife. Lucrezia placed certain demands upon him. For her sake he attempted to meet these demands, even at the sacrifice of his ideal. The entire poem is a lament of a soul that has seen the ideal, caught the vision, and then fallen short of it.

> " . . . the whole seems to fall into a shape
> As if I saw alike my work and self
> And all that I was born to be and do, --
> A twilight piece." (1)

The sacrifice of his ideal for Lucrezia's sake but attests the fact that once there must have been a charm of personality to her that won the heart of Andrea. Perhaps at one time she may even have loved him, and this love in her heart could easily have blinded Andrea to the selfish nature hid beneath. With all the physical beauty that she possessed, lit by even a faint light of love in her eyes, she might induce one, as she induced Andrea, to draw near to worship and then, with passion aflame, to love and to marry her, only in after years to disclose the real Lucrezia, from whom selfishness and greed have erased any possible charm that might linger. Lucrezia is profoundly selfish. In the very introduction of the poem we have the suggestion of a word battle which seems to have been caused by her selfish desire for material prosperity that she may satisfy her own

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 346.

wants.

"But do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish." (1)

With the promise of her desire to be fulfilled she turns to him. Andrea is now sitting with his wife, on the window seat, looking out toward Fiesole. He urges her to turn to him and be as she used to be. Here again we have an insight into the change that must have taken place in her since he first loved her. We can picture her, with a certain scornful disdain, as she faces him, and he realizes that she is not loving him. In fact she has become incapable of experiencing that finer emotion that should exist between them. Andrea speaking says:

"You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?" (2)

No. Browning has refused to conbine the good and the evil in this character. He has made her incapable of any love but that all absorbing self-love which is so deplorable. He has almost reached the ultra-human; for rarely in actual life do we find a character which does not possess a few of the more common altruistic traits which become the redeeming factor in a selfish disposition. Yet Browning would not suggest any such in the person of Lucrezia. There is not even a shadow of the aesthetic in her nature which might serve to soften the severity of the picture.

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 346.
(2) Ibid. p. 346.

Andrea cannot free himself from her selfish grasp, though he recognize it; he merely talks about it and the inhibiting factor it has proved to be to himself. As he talks with her he realizes that she is the cause, yet only momentarily does he suggest this:

> " . . . And wherefore out?
> Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
> We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!" (1)

Hardly has he said this when he recants:

> "Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think --
> More than I merit, yes, by many times." (2)

Never once in the entire poem does one come to feel that his lament carries any conscious reproach. Rather he excuses her and would still seek out a way whereby he may increase his material success, and thus hold Lucrezia to him:

> "If you would sit thus by me every night
> I should work better, do you comprehend?
> I mean that I should earn more, give you more." (3)

Lucrezia knows her power over him, based on his weakness and passion for her, and dares to capitalize it to an unfair end, that is the winning of her own selfish desires. It is not difficult to visualize the person of Lucrezia. One may see her as she is with him; cold and indifferent to his love, bored by his frank confession of moral wrong and artistic failure, who, even as he is talking, is plotting some-

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 347.
(2) Ibid. p. 347.
(3) Ibid. p. 347.

thing that will bring further satisfaction to her selfish heart. One can hear her say to herself, "I want none of him, I want rather those things which I seek --" Nothing that he can say changes her in the least; rather within her self asserts itself again.

Andrea goes over the situation and admits to himself that he must decide for all time between fame and Lucrezia. For a moment it seems as if he will assert his own best self; yet in the next moment he is back just where he was, where he no longer desires to fight against what seems to be the inevitable. She has sapped him of his last desire. Browning would suggest that such a selfish personality as Lucrezia's will prove an inhibiting force even in the life to come:

> "In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance --
> Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
> Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
> For Leonard, Rafael, Angelo, and me
> To cover -- the three first without a wife,
> While I have mine! So -- still they overcome
> Because there's still Lucrezia, -- as I choose." (1)

Andrea has yielded completely to Lucrezia's influence; he has given all, but she is not satisfied. No purely selfish personality is ever satisfied. Instead she sickens of his endurance of her every wish or whim, and comes to hate his passion for her and his morbid remorse of wasted talent and opportunity. She seeks a new something to satisfy her. That satisfaction she finds in the person of her cousin, whom, if he really knew her, would not be so infatu-

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 348.

ated by her. She craves a new sensation; so, having checked and killed all that was worthwhile in the faultless painter, she leaves him for another.

In the last analysis, one is forced to admit that in the delineation of this character Lucrezia Browning has clearly shown the moral effect of a selfish, self-centered life upon another who, weakened by impassioned love, falls a prey to its inhibiting, restraining, demoralizing influence, only in the end to be deserted by the one to whom he has given all.

Lucrezia stands as the incarnation of selfish greed. She is one of the few characters in Browning's works that we leave with a feeling that she is wholly bad. Browning has not softened her personality with either truth or goodness in their higher forms, and has only allowed her that beauty which, being purely physical, is cold and unenduring. She is selfish, egoistic, self-centered, whose one thought in life is the desire to satisfy her own individual self. She has no regard for persons: she accepts, permits and, one might say, demands all, at any price, that she may be satisfied.

No one, save Browning, who had that rare personality of Mrs. Browning for his companion and helpmate, can realize what the opposite type could do to harm genius and talent.

Constance: The Prostitution of the Spirit of Self-sacrifice.

Introduction: An Epitome of the Poem, "In a Balcony."

I. Tangible Attributes of Constance's Personality

  A. Physical appearance

  B. General impression through contrast

II. Subtle Aspects of Individuality of Constance

  A. Sensitiveness to relationship: duty, gratitude

  B. Insight into human nature: intuitive power

  C. Selfishness: desire for personal happiness

  D. Dominant emotions: doubt, suspicion, jealousy

  E. Varieties of deceit:

    1. False excuses

    2. Deliberate lying

    3. Evasion of truth

    4. Prostitution of self-sacrifice

  F. Incapacity for true love:

    1. Defeated by hatred, jealousy, selfishness

    2. Purified by Norbert's love

General Summary:

The closet drame, "In a Balcony," introduces us to Browning's woman, Constance. This is but a fragment of what the author may have intended for a longer drame; thus we find it equivalent to the third and fourth acts, or the final complication and resolution of the plot.

The essence of the story is as follows: Constance the Queen's cousin is secretly loved by Norbert, who has entered the diplomatic service of the Queen, for the sole purpose of winning Constance. Norbert however has allowed the Queen to believe that he served her purely from the motive of loyalty. His year of service has proved so markedly successful that he is now in the position where he feels free to request the hand of Constance in marriage as a fitting reward for his service. The complication appears in Constance's unwillingness to have Norbert make known his request. Constance's evasion of the truth finally involves the happiness of both Norbert and the Queen and ends in the usual tragedy of such a situation.

Our description of Constance's physical appearance comes chiefly through the medium of contrast to the Queen. Constance, the poor relation and protégée of the Queen, is young and beautiful, with the freshness and vigor of one in the early twenties. She is tall and slender and graceful, with light hair and lovely blue eyes and a touch of natural color in her cheeks, and that personal charm which warrents Norbert's love at first sight. It is difficult to call her appearance

striking, she is ultra-feminine, with almost an excessive grace and charm about her, which seems but a mask to her real personality. She is a pretty girl, yet with a weakness of personality which is denoted by the absence of clear-cut features. Her sheltered life has but made possible the preservation of what natural endowments were hers, and costly clothes and social position make the necessary background for the final picture.

The external Constance, in view of the comparative lack of description, was of little importance to our author;rather he sketched for us the truer character traits and left us to discern the real Constance through the study of her behavior. Constance is living at the palace with the Queen. She has been given the rights of a daughter in the home, and her physical wants are amply provided for. Yet there is a marked sensitiveness as to her position and a constant realization that her life is very much in the hands of the Queen, who has the power to make or mar it. We may judge then, although there is no outward friction in this relationship, that inwardly no doubt Constance feels a constant chafing and desire to be free from the dictates of another. Yet she lacks the moral courage to make any decided break which would necessitate a different social and economic position for herself. However she may feel, she performs her duties faithfully, and what is more realizes that she has a certain moral obligation, a debt of gratitude, to fulfill toward the Queen, for she it is to whom she owes all that she has:

"I owe that withered woman everything --
Life, fortune, you, remember!" (1)

Constance possesses a certain insight into human nature; she has that intuitive sense of woman that leads her to know that Norbert loves her long before he declares his love; furthermore, she is ablt to understand the heart of the Queen. Nowhere do we find a more accurate picture of a disappointed soul yearning for love, affection, and sympathetic understanding than in the word description which Constance gives to Norbert. She has caught the pathos of a situation in life where love is lacking:

" . . . there's a life
Better than life, and yet no life at all." (2)

This would prove a most admirable trait did she not divert its power to unlovely purposes. Knowing the Queen's life as she does, she realizes the futility of allowing the Queen to suspect that she is in love with Norbert. Constance therefore relies on quick thinking and sly craftiness to prevent her relationship from being apprehended. She thus succeeds in keeping her meetings with Norbert entirely secret:

"Complot inscrutable, deep telegraphs,
Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards of a look, ..."
(3)

Therefore when Norbert would make known his love for Constance it becomes easy to understand how she might urge him to secrecy, or at least to a course of action in which he would proceed cautiously.

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 367.
(2) Ibid., p.365.
(3) Ibid., p. 365.

It seems unfair to suppose that Constance's sympathy for the Queen's feeling could be her sole motive for action. Rather is she too selfish to allow her interest in others to encroach upon her own happiness. She desires Norbert's love for herself and is determined to secure her own future happiness. This is forcefully illustrated in her repetition of the words, "It will ruin us." In fact, one is led to doubt her interest in Norbert's happiness, save as it contributes directly to her own.

With this selfish desire for happiness and love comes the involved question as to how she may best obtain it, and having obtained it how she may be convinced of its genuineness. First, she will discover whether or not Norbert is sincere in his love for her; something in his words, "let me make you mine," has caused her to doubt him:

> "I am not yours then? how content this man!
> I am not his who change into himself,
> Have passed into his heart and beat its beats,
> Who gave my hands to him, my eyes, my hair,
> Gave all that was of me away to him --" (1)

Doubt breeds suspicion, suspicion of Norbert and suspicion of the Queen. Possibly the Queen is tempting him with riches and power, and he in turn may, in spite of his passionate avowal of love to her, yet yield to the temptation presenting itself in the form of power and possessions.. Just as truly as doubt has bred suspicion suspicion has awakened the dormant element of jealousy in her nature. Jealousy becomes

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 364.

the dominant force or passion motivating her entire action, and leads her to resort to any method for the testing of Norbert's love. Herein is a marked weakness of character; for, rather than attempt to rid herself of her jealousy, she yields to it and lets it destroy her honesty and truthfulness, and possibly the finer qualities of her love.

Deceit in its variety of forms is her acid for the testing of Norbert's love, deceit which she justifies by the end which she would secure. Three separate times she offers a false excuse for her refusal to have Norbert openly declare his love.

First, she paints an enticing picture of the political success and glory that may be his if he but act wisely; she urges him to forget her and to spurn the sacrifice of his future for her sake. Knowing what position and power mean to her, she dares to estimate their worth to Norbert by this same scale of values:

> "'Name your own reward!'
> With leave to clench the past, chain the to-come,
> Put out an arm and touch and take the sun
> And fix it full-faced on your earth,
> Possess yourself supremely of her life, --
> You choose the single thing she will not grant;
> Nay, very declaration of which choice
> Will turn the scale and neutralize your work:
> * * *
> You think I'll let you choose -- her cousin's hand?"(1)

No doubt she covets Norbert's social and political position to make secure her own future, but she has failed to tempt

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 364.

Norbert in this manner.

Second, without leaving Norbert a chance for argument, she throws her next false excuse before him in the form of an appeal to his honor by repaying to the Queen his full debt of gratitude, which the Queen has a just right to expect. She even suggests that the offer of his hand in marriage might be his proffered gratitude to her:

"How shall your gratitude discharge itself?" (1)

Again failure is her reward. Norbert recognizes no such debt of gratitude, rather to him is due gratitude from the Queen.

Her third resource is that bearing an appeal to Norbert to regard the Queen's hunger for love in her life and the subtle suggestion of the Queen's jealousy of their happiness and the desire for Norbert's love for herself. Her third excuse has but added another failure. Any suggestion of the Queen's love becomes repulsive and impossible to Norbert, and leads directly to a reaffirmation of his one passionate love, namely, his love for Constance. Herein do we discover the hold that jealousy has on Constance's thinking. One finds it impossible to understand how such a frank avowal of love can leave any hesitation on the part of the woman; yet Constance is incapable of experiencing that finer quality of love because of her very nature; thus jealousy continues to hold her in its grip and to become more strong.

(1)Camb. Ed., p. 365.

False excuses having failed she resorts to deliberate lying. Here,then,are two specific illustrations: first, the lie she induces Norbert to tell regarding his love for the Queen, the futility of it, and his willingness to compromise by the acceptance of Constance; and secondly, her bold denial to the Queen that she loves Norbert. Both lies only involve the situation and fail to test, to the satisfaction of Constance, Norbert's avowed love. In her lying she resorts to the nicety of word-form, which makes the lie seem not a lie but rather just a clever means for tactfully securing the desired end:

> "If I were you, I could obtain this grace --
> Could lay the whole I did to love's account,
> Nor yet be very false as courtiers go --
> Declaring my success was recompense.
> It would be so, in fact: what were it else?
> And then, once loose her generosity, --
> Oh, how I see it! then, were I but you
> To turn it, let it seem to move itself,
> And make it offer what I really take,
> Accepting just, in the poor cousin's hand,
> Her value as the next thing to the Queen's --
> Since none love Queens directly, none dare that,
> And a things shadow or a name's mere echo
> Suffices those who miss the name and thing!
> You pick up just a ribbon she has worn,
> To keep in proof how near her breath you came.
> Say, I'm so near I seem a piece of her --
> Ask for me that way --" (1)

Her lie in the first case is intended for a double purpose, to give Norbert a chance to recant if he so desires and to plan a safe way of approach to the Queen, that, if Norbert is sincere, she may secure her desired end. Deceit here

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 366.

has blurred her insight into the nature of the Queen; she judges her by her own petty standard of selfishness, and overlooks the fact that possibly there is another phase of her nature with which she is unfamiliar.

A corollary of her deliberate lying is her crafty manner of evading the truth. Repeatedly when in conversation with the Queen she evades the issue putting forth a phrase of two which is non-committal and which shows strongly her lack of moral courage to take issue and defend her love for Norbert:

"Why should you doubt it?"
* * *
I cannot understand --
* * *
Tell it me: let me judge if true of false.
* * *
Who could have comprehended?
* * *
Me, Madam?" (1)

There are many such quotations which show clearly her disingenuous evasion of the truth.

Her deceit reaches its height in the acting of a lie, in which she dares to prostitute the true spirit of self-sacrifice. This prostitution has been hinted at in her first false excuse to Norbert, when she seemingly refuses to permit the sacrifice of his future for her; it now comes to its actual head by the fatal turn of events which has vouchsafed Norbert's love to the Queen by her willingness to accept him. The situation has become so involved that for the sake of her own reputation Constance must assume the attitude of self-

(1) Camb. Ed., pp. 367,368.

sacrifice in regard to Norbert's love. With that same florid style, she paints her part as merely that of encouraging Norbert's love for the Queen, and now, having brought him to the point of declaring his love, her part is over, she surrenders all to the Queen:

> "Enough, my part is played; you stoop half-way
> And meet us royally and spare our fears:
> 'Tis like yourself. He thanks you, so do I.
> Take him with my full heart! my work is praised
> By what comes of it." (1)

Constance's deliberate deceit in its varies forms becomes decidedly repulsive. It gives evidence of a total lack of conscience, which would have led to remorse and repentance for her sin. Rather we find a cutting bravado and subtle jesting which but accentuates her moral weakness. With truth completely sacrificed and selfishness and jealousy forming such an intricate part of her character, one doubts her avility to love truly.

We have in the words of Constance herself a statement of her love for Norbert and a seeming surrender of self to him:

> "Not till now!
> You were mine. Now I give myself to you.
> * * *
> I give all at once.
> * * *
> I give you all myself." (2)

Yet in the declaration of this love there seems to be an

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 371.
(2) Ibid., p. 369.

element of her lower nature rather than the finer self. In a moment of passionate love, when she realizes that in all probability he is lost to her because of her deceit, she literally thrusts herself blindly into his life, for what purpose she knows not. A life like Constance's so held by the power of selfish, jealous passion is incapable of the larger love, and ultimately degenerates to hatred. This is true of Constance, and expresses itself in her jealous hatred of the Queen.

"Ha, what's this?
You two glare each at each like panthers now." (1)

Even the final burst of what we should like to believe to be pure love fails to show in Constance a heart capable of experiencing love in its finer forms. In fact, this may be attributed to the purifying effect of a love so passionate, real, and pure as was Norbert's love for Constance. Norbert realizes the true personality of Constance yet loves her:

"Though I might curse, I love you. I am love
And cannot change: love's self is at your feet!" (2)

It is love's self that purifies Constance's love to the degree that is does, and it is fitting that in the moment of purification she die; for it is impossible to believe that a soul like Constance's could, in this life, reach the pinacle of love and long retain it.

Constance presents to us a very human soul. Her sense

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 372.
(2) Camb. Ed., p. 372.

of responsibility, her insight into human nature, her desire for happiness -- each in turn are to be commended; on the other hand, her selfishness, her bold deceit, her jesting with the sacred in life, her jealousy, her willingness to prostitute the spirit of self-sacrifice, her utter lack of conscience and moral integrity, and her incapacity for true love -- these are to be deplored. Constance dies far nobler than she has lived, for her life is freed from the shadow of moral unstabilization which has robbed it of its purer light and radiance; yet in death all is absorbed in the purity of love and the future possibility of restoration.

James Lee's Wife: The Pathos of Disillusioned Love.

I. First Indication of Lessening Love:
   A. Anxiety leads to doubt
   B. Instability of things applied to Love
   C. Apprehension increases to fear

II. Unsuccessful Attempt to Allay Fear:
   A. Constancy of Divine Love vs. human love
   B. Fear becomes certainty
   C. Her redundant love a bondage

III. Philosophical Relfection on Love:
   A. Transforming power of true love
   B. Acceptance of law of change as applicable to life
   C. Purpose and knowledge belong to God

IV. Fatalistic Acceptance of Unrequited Love:
   A. Spirit of self-effacement
   B. Substitution of duty for happiness

V. Final Sacrifice for Love:
   A. Omnipotence of love
   B. Futility of relationship without love
   C. Surrendered object of love

Enshrined within the nine short poems which, when taken as a unit, comprise the poem "James Lee's Wife" is to be found one of the most interesting studies of the wife-type in Browning's works -- interesting from the viewpoint of being entirely human.

We know little of the person of James Lee, and only slightly more of his wife. It becomes necessary to construct her character solely from the words that she utters. In a little cottage near the shore she and her husband live, so close that even their little garden plot is ledgy and barren, scarce yielding herbage for the rabbit that chances by. Here we can picture them as they came to make this their home on their wedding day. The simple cottage seemed a palace; the ocean with its rugged cliffs was beautiful; all of this was home to them because they loved each other and were happy together. The seasons came and went, those first years together, but they knew no change, for love was the fusing element, and life was real to them.

The author would suggest that they have been married now many years, and that the glory of those first golden years is past. The hand of time has wrought a slow but subtle change in the heart of James Lee: he has ceased to love his wife as he did. Once love has cooled it is difficult to assume the attitude of love again. The time has come when his wife knows that she is no longer loved. Probably the realization of this fact came gradually to her. Love slowly changed to

passion, and then even the fires of passion burned out, leaving only the dead ashes of indifference.

The change in his manner toward her arouses her anxiety as to his affection for her and leads her to doubt. One can easily picture her as she goes about the tasks of every day, watching him with an eagle eye, seeking an expression of his love for her that will banish her fears.

When first she speaks it is in the most commonplace situation. He is returning to the house, and, eager to see him, she goes to the window to speak to him. There is a note of tender affection in her words, yet in her heart there is questioning. All around her is the marked change of the season: summer is gone; autumn and winter are at hand. Somehow as never before she senses this change in the material world and asks herself if the change is applicable also to the things of the spirit:

"Ah, Love, but a day
  And the world has changed!
The sun's away
  And the bird estranged;
The wind has dropped,
  And the sky's deranged:
Summer has stopped.
  Look in my eyes!
Wilt thou change too?" (1)

She fails to receive the response of love that her heart craves; even the plea for the external expression of love strikes no responsive note. Yet there are within her those

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 373.

truly feminine instincts which, even in the face of fact, dare to trust and hope. No, she will not yet admit that in no way is her love returned. Browning here introduces the element of analytical reasoning into his character, which tends to heighten the interest, but which also tends to increase the intellectuality of woman above that normally found in a similar situation.

As she is sitting with him before the fire watching the burning driftwood send its sparks upward, she lets her fancy play around the situation. The driftwood suggests shipwreck, danger, sea-life, sailors longing for home, and she asks herself if after all life isn't much like that. All shipwrecks are not on the ocean. Again her imagination exerts itself; she realizes that the old house to which they came so happy may have been the love-ship of some other pair. Did it sail successfully for them? No, perhaps another has experienced the very thing she fears. Perhaps the love-ship's planks started, and another experienced the disaster of destroyed love. Anyone setting sail on the ocean faces certain possible dangers: they took the chance -- and so did she:

> "Well, poor sailors took their chance;
> I take mine." (1)

Try as she will, there comes a deepened note of anxiety in her words, which she would discard if she could. No longer able to stand the fire, she turns to the out-of-doors seeking still some changeless value which will convince her

(1) Camb Ed., p. 373.

that her doubts are but the fruit of her imagination, and are groundless. All around her is the change of winter; nature is cold, barren, unlovely. Yet she is well cared for. For a moment she looks beyond self to a good God who has amply supplied her needs. They two have all the necessities of life, even more, for he has given them love, divine love and human love. Did He intend that all this should change?

> "But why must cold spread? But wherefore bring change
> To the spirit,
> God meant should mate his with an infinite range,
> And inherit
> His power to put life into the darkness and cold?" (1)

She clings to the constancy of divine love and applies it to human love, but it fails to meet her need in this specific case. Rather her fear increases to a certainty. She no longer refuses to admit that he does not love her but rather, admitting the fact, is determined to discuss it with him with the hope of discerning why he has ceased to love her. True to her sex, she is certain that the fault is not hers; she believed that he wanted her love, and so she gave the full measure of it to him:

> "You wanted my love -- is that much true?
> And so I did love, so I do:" (2)

Yet, "What has come of it all along?" There is almost a note of bitterness as she says this. Browning here has caught in word picture one of the most tragic experiences of love.

(1) Camb. Ed., 374.
(2) Ibid., p. 374.

To picture James Lee's Wife talking to her husband takes little imagination. She forces herself to an outward calm which is almost superhuman, yet her words carry the intimation of deep emotion: "I loved you because I couldn't help it." "No, I was not blind to your faults, but I did not love you the less for them." "I loved you completely and gave you my all." These words might well be the direct quotation of her words to him. They ring with the passion of that true love which many women have given for those they have held most dear.

> "I took you -- how could I otherwise?
> For a world to me and more;
> For all, love greatens and glorifies
> Till God's aglow, to the loving eyes
> In what was mere earth, before." (1)

With keen insight into human nature, Browning realized that love can become a bondage to one who does not seek love or appreciate it. James Lee is such a man: he has emotion but not love; he soon chafes under the tender, loving, affectionate, devotion of his wife. He considers her redundant love a restriction, and would escape from it. The truth of this situation she meets without any apparent show of emotion. Clearly the intellectual is the strongest element at present in the situation. She leaves him and, save for the company of a book goes alone to the cliffs.

One can visualize her as she approaches, lost in thought, with that far away look in her eyes. At first she is not

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 374.

interested in any of her surroundings, yet presently as she rests there, leaning against a rock, her eyes wander from one thing to another. Suddenly a butterfly and a cricket settle down before her. Her attention is drawn to them, rather indifferently at first, but if we were to watch her, we should see a change of facial expression. She becomes interested. There before her is a practical application of the very situation about which she is thinking. Their presence brings light, life, and beauty to the barrenness of this dead turf and these flat rocks. Wholly unconscious of all else, she realizes that even so comes the transforming power of love to a barren life, beautifying it. She has all unknowingly come to the point of philosophizing on the situation which the fate of circumstances has left her:

> "Is it not so
> With the minds of men?
> The level and low,
> The burnt and bare, in themselves; but then
> With such a blue and red grace, not theirs, --
> Love settling unawares!" (1)

Having sought out a comfortable spot, she rests upon the cliff, presently turning her attention to her book, perhaps with the intention of forgetting. But there is within the book that which contributes to her mental state, and so the expression of her fear returns. She has reached the stage of transition between struggle and resignation, and into this struggle there comes a moment of self pity for which she cannot wholly be blamed. The very moaning of the

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 374.

wind, as expressed in the poem she is reading, is apostrophized by the author and made to contribute in a sympathetic way to her feeling.

She comes to accept the law of change as the law of life; consequently she admits that nothing can be as it has been before:

> "Nothing can be as it has been before;
> Better so call it, only not the same.
> To draw one beauty into our heart's core,
> And keep it changeless! Such our claim;
> So answered, -- Never more!" (1)

Yet in her philosophizing of the question there comes the Unknown Quantity, God, which, even though she cannot explain it, she has to admit as a factor in the situation. He alone knows the reason for all that is. She may speculate, question, and even dare to suggest, that it comes from God as an ultimate good, but she cannot answer her questions nor prove her faith:

> "That's a new question; still replies the fact,
> Nothing endures: the wind moans, saying so;
> We moan in acquiescence: there's life's pact
> Perhaps probation -- do I know?
> God does: endure his act!" (2)

Restless from her thinking, she turns and wanders among the rocks. The bright autumn morning throws its genial influence over her spirits, and there is born within her heart the spirit of self-effacement. With almost a fatalistic attitude towards live, she accepts what is as necessary:

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 375.
(2) Ibid., p. 375.

"That is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true;
Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles and knows.
If you loved only what were worth your love,
Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you:
Make the low nature better by your throes!
Give earth yourself, go up for gain above!" (1)

Having reached that stage in her thinking, she must of necessity turn to something in which she may find that happiness which love has denied her. She leaves the rocks and out-of-doors for her home again. As if she would forget, she occupies her mind with her art; but even here she cannot forget. The mind of woman is forever active. She has been drawing from the cast of a beautiful hand. As she draws, there comes to her this great truth, namely, that the usefulness of this hand is entirely distinct from its beauty; so with life, its tasks and duties are separate from love. Life has obligations which will endure even after love is dead; life can never escape duty:

"Who art thou, with stinted soul
And stunted body, thus to cry,
'I love, -- shall that be life's strait dole?
I must live beloved or die!'" (2)

She realizes the foolishness of this, and so, having learned the truth, faces duty that herein she may find happiness.

When she has thought the situation through, she comes to the place where she feels that she must make the final sacrifice. She has decided to leave her husband, to give him freedom from the bondage of her love that he seems to

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 375.
(2) Ibid., p. 376.

desire:

"Nothing I was that deserves a place
In your mind, now I leave you, set you free." (1)

Yet in so doing she states her belief in the power of love; she seems to feel that had he loved her as she loved him she would have come to mean as much to him as he has meant to her:

"Conceeded! I turn, conceed to me,
Such things have been as a mutual flame.
Your soul's locked fast; but love for a key,
You might let it loose, till I grew the same
In your eyes, as in mine you stand: . . ." (2)

She frankly tells him that there is nothing in her attitude toward him that he can condemn, had he but returned the love she gave. The poem ends with the statement of James Lee's Wife, that should she ever come to receive such love as she has given, it would prove too much, she would die from pure joy.

In and through the character study of such a woman as James Lee's Wife we find much that is truly human; but at times we come to question certain traits and ask just what Browning meant one to see in them. Throughout the entire poem one is led to ask the question, "Does she truly love James Lee?" Without a doubt, I believe Browning meant for us to see in James Lee's Wife a woman who truly loved her husband, but I think too that he has also introduced that

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 376.
(2) Ibid., p. 376.

other great principle of love, namely, that love must be reciprocated or it dies. One is led to believe that this is true in the character of James Lee's Wife. She lives as many women of every age who, having faced the problem of unrequited love, attempt to prove true purely from a sense of duty. When the time comes that she leaves him, she may persuade herself into believing that she is measuring up to the supreme price of love, self-sacrifice; but in truth she is worn out from the struggle to keep his love, and, surrendering, desires to be free from it all.

James Lee's Wife is a clear delineation of one of the many phases of wifehood. We hear her as she speaks for herself, and through her words we gain insight into the mental struggle in which she finds herself. Love, devotion, and self-effacement are interwoven in this wife, as in every true wife, yet we find here a complexity of mental analysis far different from the mental process of many others, and possibly even above the average.

Pompilia: The Focal Point in the Synoptic View of Truth.

Introduction: A Suggestion as to the Source Material and Poetic Form

I. Orientation of the Character Pompilia:
   A. Birth and parentage
   B. Foster parents and early environment
   C. Marriage and subsequent events

II. The Personality of Pompilia:
   A. Objectively viewed in the actual experiences of her life:
      1. Her marriage
      2. Her married life with Guido
      3. Her acquaintance with Caponsacchi
      4. Her flight with Caponsacchi
      5. Her life at the convent
      6. Period of motherhood
   B. Subjectively viewed in her dying confession:
      1. Her faith in God
      2. Her forgiveness of wrong
      3. Her philosophy of life and death

General Summary:

In "The Ring and the Book," representative as it is of the most mature period of Browning's creative power, the poet has produced his masterpiece. "The Ring and the Book" has for source material the "Old Yellow Book," a copy of the record of the famous court case of the Franceschini murder, which took place in Rome in the year1698. The story in brief is that of a young girl, Pompilia, who has been given in marriage by her foster parents to a certain Count Guido Franceschini. The marriage has been made on the one side with the hope of bettering the social standing of the individual and on the other from the desire for financial increase. Difference in age, social standing, and the failure to realize avowed desires, leads to a complication of the story until in the end, through trickery and false accusations, the marriage is broken, the murder of Pompilia is effected, and the murderer, Count Guido, hanged.

Browning has selected from this material the main body of fact, which, through the power of his imagination, he has woven into the dramatic monologue known as "The Ring and the Book." This work is arranged in the form of twelve books, books I and and XII being the prologue and epilogue, and books II - XI representing the evidence of groups and persons summoned to give testimony in the case with the hope of securing accurately the truth. Herein has Browning illustrated the many-sidedness of truth and the need for viewing it from as large a number of angles as possible. "The Ring and the Book" is masterfully executed both in regard to structure and in regard

to sustained interest, but the zenith of the poet's power seems to be reached in his characterization. Each of the characters is highly individualized, yet all are proportionate to the subject matter and vividly real. "The Ring and the Book" would become at once dull and uninteresting were it not for this excellent piece of characterization, and especially the characterization of Pompilia, who stands out as the most beautiful personality of the entire group.

Francesca Pompilia, generally known to lovers of literature merely as "Pompilia," was born in Lorenzo, Italy, in the year 1680, and is an authentic, historical personage, whom our author has recreated for the world to know and to love. For a period covering about the first fifteen years of her life Pompilia was supposed to have been the legitimate daughter of Violante and Pietro Comparini: at the end of that time Violante confessed to the officials concerning the true parentage of Pompilia. Thus one knows her to be the base-born daughter of a harlot who frequented the outskirts of Rome, and who, either under necessity or the desire for the price that the child would bring, sold her to Violante, to be passed off by her on her husband as their own child. Under such circumstances as this nothing could be known as to the father of the child.

Violante and Pietro were very simple, middle aged, uneducated folk of the middle class, with only small material possessions, yet with enough to live their life simply had

they been willing so to live; but both being fond of show and good living they subsequently ran themselves into debt. The only means of release from this debt seemed to be the securing of the sum of money that would be at their disposal had they an heir, thus the reason for Violante's deceit concerning Pompilia's parentage. Bought by Violante and taken into her home as her own and her husband's child, Pompilia may next be seen under the influence of this second environment. Browning has led one to believe that she was loved by her foster-parents, but how much is doubtful when one realizes that Violante's chief desire for offspring was purely mercenary. Be that as it may, Pompilia's early life, up to the age of fourteen, was spent at home in Lorenzo a little distance from Rome. Here she seemed happy, although deprived of much of the best in life.

It is impossible to conceive of much real love existing in the early environment. Yet Pompilia in her simple way seems devoted to those whom she believed to be her parents. Her early life was spent in the normal pursuits of childhood, yet education and the finer arts of life were not included. She lacks a trained intellect, and at the age of thirteen is a mere child, shielded from the world, and to a large degree innocent and unsophisticated in regard to the fundamental things of life.

However Pompilia is not destined to remain long innocent of life. A premature marriage to Count Guido - sanctioned by

her mother with the hope of doing well by Pompilia -- followed by three years of patient submission to a man for whom she has no love, constant worry and loneliness and cruelty, false charges of adultery, and lastly the experience of motherhood and suffering, matured her long before her years. When death closed her life at the age of seventeen she had lived to know and to suffer much.

Browning has meant for his reader to correlate the evidence found in each of the testimonies of the several witnesses into a synoptic view which will be representative of the true personality of Pompilia. An effective method of securing this true estimate may best be secured by the analysis of her conduct.

In Pompilia's marriage to Count Guido, at the Chapel in Lorenzo, when she was but a child of thirteen years, one sees something of the innocence which was hers. Marriage to her meant nothing; she was totally uneducated in matters pertaining to sex or married life. She passed through the ceremony, she says, as one might pass through a visit to the doctor. To her it was a necessary experience, prearranged and executed but meaningless . The only sensation at all was that of fear, and when the ceremony was over this fear was soon forgotten. In fact, her complete unsophistication carried her to the point where she believed she would see no more of Guido:

"However I was hurried through a storm,
* * *
Into bland San Lorenzo, up the aisle,
My mother keeping hold of me so tight,
* * *

> And straightway down
> From . . . what's behind the altar where hid --
> Hawk-nose and yellowness and bush and all,
> Stepped Guido, caught my hand, and there was I
> O' the chancel, and the priest had opened book,
> Read here and there, made me say that and this,
> And after, told me I was now a wife,
> Honored indeed, since Christ thus weds the Church,
> And therefore turned he water into wine,
> To show I should obey my spouse like Christ." (1)

> "When I saw nothing more, the next three weeks,
> Of Guido -- 'Nor the Church sees Christ,' thought I:
> 'Nothing is changed however wine is wine
> And water only water in our house.
> Nor did I see that ugly doctor since
> That cure of the illness: just as I was cured,
> I am married, -- neither scarecrow will return.'" (2)

The fact of his reappearance and the knowledge that she was to live with him came as a complete shock to her tender nature. The entire idea was repulsive to her, and it only became tolerable at all because her own parents were to be with her. Her unsophistication and lack of proper training carried over into the experiences of her married life. She was physically immature and unprepared for wifehood and its experiences. The very fact of the extreme differences in ages necessitated an entire readjustment in her life. Nevertheless, with courage and patience she met the situation. As far as possible she yielded to her husband's wishes, yet within her was a sense of what the ideal relationship in love should be. Intuition aided by Guido's frank statements convinced her that true love was lacking in her own experience; thus the legitimate expression of the love-life became repulsive to her, so that she desired to escape from it. More-

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 512.
(2) Ibid., p. 513.

over her sensitive nature was constantly affronted by the temptations offered by Guido's brother. With moral courage she withstood each effrontery and was uncomplaining to others. Her spiritual nature led her to the church for advice, but when she found that the ecclesiastics were human and corrupt she turned to God for help.

Her patience is further attested by the endurance of the domestic turmoil caused by the fact of the two families living together. No doubt there is a degree of justice in Guido's attitude toward the in-laws, yet Pompilia is forced to countenance his cruel treatment of them without the ability to oppose it. Her sympathies are naturally with her parents; but even when they are turned penniless from the house she remains tolerant of Guido's action. The summit of her tolerance of Guido is reached when patiently she endures his slanderous, cruel treatment after he learns of her illegitimate birth. She is quite unaware of Guido's damnable plan to ruin soul as well as body that he may rid himself of her, and so with meekness and humble obedience she endures until she is physically unfit to endure it longer.

Added praise is to be given her when one realizes that she is among strangers:

> "She, cut off sheer from every natural aid,
> In a strange town with no familiar face--" (1)

Her experience became unbearable,for she realized that,

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 462.

helpless as she was to remedy the situation, her every move was watched. Her intellect is far too simple to suspect the subtle planning of Guido to ensnare her in an immoral act that he might accomplish his desire. Her faith in people is generally sound. She has been taught to trust the clergy and the civil authorities, and in desperation she has sought aid from each, only to lose this faith because of their refusal to help her.

Count Guido's plan to engage Caponsacchi in the plot through the forging of love letters was an unheeded temptation to Pompilia. She had no desire to flirt with another, no curiosity to know what his letters contained -- for she could neither read nor write -- and no desire to arouse further the animosity of her husband. Pompilia was above any temptation to be false or immoral; rather she exerted stronger willpower with the hope of winning the kind attentions of Guido. She had sufficient faith in him to believe that underneath the cruel, rough exterior she might yet discover a more amiable personality. Love had never existed between them, but not untill actual life with Guido seemed a physical impossibility did she permit herself to consider a way of escape. Weakened as she was by physical cruelty and mental torture, Pompilia would have longed for the comfort of her parents' home. This attitude does not represent moral infidelity, it is the natural result of such experiences as she had had.

Having come to the point where she felt she could no longer endure the suffering incurred through Violante's deceit,

she seeks a possible way of escape. Caponsacchi is the natural means for effecting this escape. Her selection of him is purely neutral as far as any deep personal interest in him is concerned. She knows of him, has seen him, and has faith in him to the point of believing that he would safely conduct her to her parents' home. Her trust is childlike in its simplicity and pathetic in its appeal. She is innocent of any other motive than that of securing her own safety, and the desire to end the sinfulness of her relationship with the man she does not love. She does not then love Caponsacchi, nor can one trace in her acts any impurity of thought concerning him. With complete plans made, she trusts herself to him with the hope of reaching the safety and comfort of her parents' home. The fact that Caponsacchi loved Pompilia does not enter into her choice of him as a protective agent, for she was totally unaware of either his love for her or her love for him until a much later period. The fact of her flight is not evidence for her moral impurity, but rather it denotes a degree of self-assertion which is necessary to self-preservation, and so is to be commended. So long has she endured subjection and servitude, chiefly because her immaturity and purity of mind prevented anything else, that one is lead to pity such self-abuse and to desire in her the moral courage to protect herself.

The outcome of her flight and capture, the evidence given to support the idea of adultery, is all too well planned

and continued to be the scheme of one so young and untutored as Pompilia. She was sure from first to last. Caponsacchi was to her but the answer of her prayers for a means of escape:

" 'Have you the will? Leave God the way!'
And the way was Caponsacchi --" (1)

The simple childlike happenings during the flight but substantiate her innocence.

When convicted unjustly of a crime of which she is guiltless, her simple soul offers no rebellion to her sentence. That same gentleness, patience, and domesticity which was characteristic of her married life is equally characteristic of her imprisonment at the convent. During this period Pompilia has time to begin to understand life. She realizes that there is within her a true love for Caponsacchi, and that he too experiences it, its most beautiful spiritual form. Pompilia is capable of a deep appreciation for Caponsacchi's friendship and what he has risked to aid her. She is confident that that love will be hers in the future life even though life holds them apart:

"He was mine, he is mine, he will be mine." (2)

The approaching period of motherhood necessitated Pompilia's removal from the convent to the Comparini home, which was outside Rome. In this, the most vital experience of

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 521.
(2) Ibid., p. 521.

Pompilia's short life, she discloses that which throws light upon her inner soul. Previously innocent of life and its real meaning, she finds new hope and courage in her prospective motherhood. She possesses a great love which can now find expression in her love for her own. Her appreciation of love and of the fact that new life was to be justified only as the child of true love is one of the most beautiful aspects of her character. She is unwilling even to think of her child as the child of Guido:

> "My babe nor was, nor is, nor yet shall be
> Count Guido Franceschini's child at all --
> Only his mother's, born of love not hate!" (1)

Her tender love of the child, her anxiety for his future welfare, her desire for his life to be unhampered by the moral stigmas with which her life has been blasted, are all representative of that beautiful mother love which after all is Pompilia's outstanding virtue and which even Guido's blasphemy cannot lessen. Had Pompilia not been robbed of life by the brutal hand of Guido, she would no doubt have become one of the most beautiful mothers of history.

From a closer view of Pompilia's dying confession one may glean much of her inner thought life or spiritual nature. Simple uneducated as she was, there is a sincere wholesomeness to her soul life. Her faith in God never wavers. In spite of the severe trial to which she is subjected, she trusts him completely and through prayer finds in him the source of com-

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 524.

fort denied elsewhere. This faith even leads her to trust to his guidance when her own mind is unable to comprehend or understand the situations in which she finds herself. God is the source of steadying influence in her extreme suffering. God is the eternally just, loving, and forgiving Father, and through him all things will work for good.

Her spirit of forgiveness is Christlike, and is exemplified first in her forgiveness of her own mother's sinful life, in whom she sees not merely the degradation of a harlot but the spark of love which desired for her own something better than that which had been her experience:

> "The rather do I understand her now, --
> From my experience of what hate calls love, --
> Much love might be in what their love called hate.
> If she sold . . . what they call, sold . . .me,
> her child --
> I shall believe she hoped in her poor heart
> That I at least might try be good and pure,
> Begin to live untempted, not go doomed
> And done with ere once found in fault, as she." (1)

> "I know she meant all good to me, all pain
> To herself, --" (2)

Secondly, Pompilia's forgiveness is exemplified in the tender excuses she offers for Violante's deceit, which has cost her so much suffering. She believes that both the deceit concerning her birth and her youthful marriage were intended for her own good, and so she praises the motive while forgiving the results:

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 516.
(2) Camb. Ed., p. 511.

"She thought, moreover, real lies were lies told
For harm's sake; whereas this had good at heart,
Good for my mother, good for me, and good
For Pietro who was meant to love a babe, . . .

* * *

"-- she, instead of piercing straight
Through the pretence to the ignoble truth,
Fancied she saw God's very finger point,
Designate just the time for planting me
(The wild-brier slip she plucked to love and wear)
In soil where I could strike real root, and grow,
And get to be the thing I called myself: . . ." (1)

She believed that Violante sacrificed her own happiness, at the time of the marriage, for the future good of Pompilia, in regard both to happiness and to material prosperity. Lastly, her spirit of forgiveness reaches its height in her forgiveness of Guido. Having suffered at his hands all the cruelty and torture possible to the human soul, she in her dying words forgives him:

"For that most woeful man my husband once,
Who, needing respite, still draws vital breath,
I -- pardon him? So far as lies in me,
I give him for his good the life he takes,
Praying the world will therefore acquiesce.
Let him make God amends, -- none, none to me
Who thank him rather that, whereas strange fate
Mockingly styled him husband and me wife,
Himself this way at least pronounced divorce,
Blotted the marriage-bond: this blood of mine
Flies forth exulting at any door,
Washes the parchment white, and thanks the blow.
We shall not meet in this world nor the next,
But where will God be absent? In his face
Is light, but in his shadow healing too:
Let Guido touch the shadow and be healed!
And as my presence was importunate, --
My earthly good, temptation and a snare, --
Nothing about me but drew somehow down
His hate upon me, -- somewhat so excused

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 511.

Therefore, since hate was thus the truth of him, --
May my evanishment forevermore
Help further to relieve the heart that cast
Such object of its natural loathing forth!
So he was made; he nowise made himself:
I could not love him, but his mother did.
His soul has never lain beside my soul;
But for resisting body, -- thanks!
He burned that garment spotted by the flesh..
Whatever he touched is rightly ruined: plague
It caught, and disinfection it had craved
Still but for Guido; I am saved through him
So as by fire; to him -- thanks and farewell! (1)

One cannot read the story of Pompilia without realizing the truth of her simple philosophy of life and death. Child-like and immature as her life has seemed in many ways, sorrow and disappointment have taught her the deeper truths. She realizes that there is an intricate plan in life. People do not happen to be placed in certain environments, specific laws have governed situations so that in spite of environment one may develop a worthwhile personality:

"God plants us where we grow.
It is not that, because a bud is born
At a wild brier's end, full i' the wild beast's way,
We ought to pluck and put it out of reach
On the oak-tree top, -- say, 'There the bud belongs!'" (2)

God is so real a factor in life that the temptations and trials are not punishments but the purposeful refining of the soul to rid it of its dross. Then too death changes things: one sees them in a different perspective; one forgives, overlooks, and understands in a different way from that of active life. No matter what this life has offered of pain and disappointment to Pompilia, there is a larger life in which peace,

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 524.
(2) Ibid., p. 511.

calm, and rest end the struggling of the soul:

> "The day that one is dying, -- sorrows change
> Into not altogether sorrow-like;
> I do see strangeness but scarce misery,
> Now it is over, and no danger more.
> My child is safe; there seems not so much pain.
> It comes, most like, that I am just absolved,
> Purged of the past, the foul in me, washed fair, --
> One cannot both have and not have, you know, --
> Being right now, I am happy and color things.
> Yes, everybody that leaves life sees all
> Softened and bettered: so with other sights:
> To me at least was never evening yet
> But seemed far beautifuller than its day,
> For past is past." (1)

Yes "past is past" for Pompilia. She lived in the hope of that day when she would be spiritually united to the man she loved, when in the larger life she may love and be loved, without the mere imitations which marriage on earth has meant to her. Heaven is to Pompilia a place of final retribution; things there are as they seem.

Pompilia is one of Browning's most resplendent characters. From her creation to the present time she has captured the imagination of every reader. Born of a harlot, she has defied the laws of heredity and environment and blossomed as a lily from without the mire; brought up amid the mean and sordid surroundings of mercenary folk, she has shed abroad the fragrance of moral purity; forced to live among sin, vice, and cruelty, she has developed a sweet, tender, patient and tolerant attitude. Her simplicity, naturalness, and unsophistication, are lovely in themselves but exasperating to one who would have her exert her own personality

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 512.

rather than passively yield to such servitude. Her influence over the life of others is constantly for good, as in the case of Caponsacchi. Her sense of the pure in love, which finds expression in her spiritual love for Caponsacchi, is profoundly beautiful. Her fortitude is unbroken; her moral courage never fails; and even her physical strength at times is equal to that of man.

Her spiritual insight gives her a wholesome philosophy of life, and, although she is uneducated, her intuition leads her to see things in their right perspective. Her faith in God enables her to believe that there is a divine plan in life. Her innate goodness demands a complete forgiveness of all who have wronged her, and she far surpassed the demand, for she not only forgives she also loves.

The most beautiful aspect of Pompilia's life is her joy in motherhood combined with the belief that pure love is the only justification for parenthood. From the moment she became aware of her condition until her day of death she commended her boy to God, she exemplified only the purest and tenderest love. In fact, so real and tender is Browning's treatment of motherhood that one might imagine his verses to be from the pen of Mrs. Browning. Thus, although death through martyrdom cuts short her life while she is still only a girl of seventeen and but a mother of two brief weeks, she lives forever as one pure in heart, natural and simple in life, beautiful and profound in soul, -- one of the most noble women of poetry.

Balaustion: The Capitalization of Self-possession.

Introduction:

I. Her Youth As Represented in "Balaustion's Adventure":

A. Formative period:

1. Birth and parentage

2.. Early life

B. Period of youthful activity

1. Her love of Athens

2. Her ability as a leader:

(a) To inspire

(b) To plan

(c) To execute

3. Greek culture:

(a) Knowledge and love of poetry

(b) Lyric ability -- love of beautiful

4. Culmination of her powers in the situation which arises

C. Love the transition from youth to maturity:

1. Her meeting with Euphucles

2. Her marriage

D. Finer expression of her personality:

1. Meeting and appreciation of Euripides

2. Glimpses of her real self:

(a) Her thoughts

(b) Her feelings

II. Her Maturity as Represented in "Aristophanes' Apology":

A. Basic experiences influencing her later thinking:

1. Death of Euripides

2. Fall of Athens

3. Aristophones' Apology

4. Return to Rhodes

B. Resultant effects in the personality of Balaustion:

1. Spiritual concepts:

(a) Immortality

(b) Personality

2. Mental concepts:

(a) Nature appreciation

(b) Imaginative capacity

General Summary:

"Balaustion's Adventure" and "Aristophones' Apology" furnish us with the background material necessary to orient our character Balaustion. Since both poems are of greater length than much of Browning's former work, there is need for suggesting briefly the nature of the story. Both poems are based "on the historical fact that Euripides was reverenced far more by the non-Athenian Greeks than by the Athenians, and both contain transcripts from him."(1)

"Balaustion's Adventure" represents the story of a young Rhodian girl who, in the fact of opposition, prevents Rhodes from joining the Peloponnesian league against Athens, and by the force of her own personality persuades her kinsmen to migrate with her to Athens. The poem deals with the fortunes of the party after they have set sail. Through seeming misfortune, because of the fact that they are believed to be in alliance against Athens, they are about to meet defeat in their purpose when Balaustion, aided by her knowledge of Euripides and ability to recite from his works, is able conclusively to prove their alliance with Athens. Her song sung at Syracuse gains for her more than the freedom of her shipmates and the right to procede unmolested to Athens, her words have touched the heart of a youth who loves her and later marries her.

"Aristophones' Apology" is, as the title shows, a sequel to "Balaustion's Adventure." It deals with the same character in the more mature period of her married life and under some-

(1) Orr: Handbook to Browning's Works, p. 123.

what different circumstances. Euripides is dead, Athens has fallen, Aristophanes has presented his argument against Euripides' works, and Balaustion is about to return to Rhodes. The story deals briefly with the return trip and the events which take place on board. It places special stress upon the individuality of Balaustion, her marked loyalty to Euripides' memory, and her continued love for Athens.

Balaustion represents a new phase in Browning's delineation of feminine characters. Heretofore he has chiefly dealt with English and Italian women. Balaustion is a Rhodian girl brought up amid the influence of Greek culture. Her early life is rich in the wholesome activity typical of girlhood. The name Balaustion, meaning "wild pomegranate blossom," is characteristic of her personality in that it portrays the mental aspect of her power:

> "We only call her Wild-pomegranate-flower,
> Balaustion; since, where'er the red bloom burns
> I' the dull dark verdure of the bounteous tree,
> Dethroning, in the Rosy Isle, the rose,
> You shall find food, drink, odor, all at once;
> Cool leaves to bind about an aching brow,
> And,never much away, the nightingale." (1)

When we first see her she is a girl of fourteen, with fine physique, keen mental ability, and an absorbing love for Athens, her mother city. Little is known of her parents save the fact that her mother is an Athenian; this fact will account for her patriotism and marked cultural development. Her very person seems to radiate a joyous happi-

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 604.

ness and youthful vivacity, yet beneath the surface one may find that stronger, more noble, luminous personality which attests emphasis upon the spiritual nature of woman rather than upon the physical. This may seem non-Grecian, but her unusual intellect, love of the beautiful, and imaginative powers -- which show even in early girlhood -- are characteristic of her kind. "Balaustion is born with that genious which has the experience of age in youth and the fire of youth in age."(1)

Her love of Athens and Athenian culture becomes the keynote of her early activity. Sparta has declared war upon Athens with the result that the leaders of the Rhodian government favor strongly union with Sparta. Balaustion, because of her strong love for Athens, urges and even assumes the responsibility of leading a group of people who are willing to maintain loyalty to Athens to migrate to the mother city:

> "I was at Rhodes -- the isle, not Rhodes the town,
> Mine was Kameiros -- when the news arrived:
> Our people rose in tumult, cried, 'No more
> Duty to Athens, let us join the League
> And side with Sparta, share the spoil, -- at worst,
> Abjure a headship that will ruin Greece!8
> And so, they sent to Knidos for a fleet
> To come and help revolters. Ere help came, --
> Girl as I was, and never out ot Rhodes
> The whole of my first fourteen years of life,
> But nourished with Ilissian mother's-milk, --
> I passionately cried to who would hear
> And those who loved me at Kameiros -- 'No!
> Never throw Athens off for Sparta's sake --
> Never disloyal to the life and light
> Of the whole world worth calling world at all!
> * * *
> To Athens, all of us that have a soul,
> Follow me!'" (2)

(1) Brooke: Poetry of Robert Browning, p. 370.
(2) Camb. Ed., p. 602.

The enthusiastic patriotism of Balaustion, prompted by love, proves an insoiration to her kinsfold. Her words stir the hearts of those who hear sufficiently to win them to her cause. Her inspiration finds fruition in a well-organized plan whereby she is able to transport her loyal supporters to Athens. Balaustion's ability as a leader shows itself in the way she has encouraged, planned, and executed that plan. Her personality and her song are a constant source of cheer to the weary, flagging oarsmen:

> "Seeing our oars flag in the rise and fall,
> I sprang upon the altar by the mast
> And sang aloft -- some genius prompting me --
> That song of ours which saved at Salamis:
> "O sons of Greeks, go, set your country free,
> Free your wives, free your children, free the fanes
> O' the Gods, your fathers founded, -- sepulchres
> They sleep in! Or save all, or all be lost!" (1)

The crew, impassioned by the girl, caught the spirit and with renewed energy "churned the black water white," until land appeared. But fate seemed against them,for they found themselves in the harbor of Syracuse rather than at their desired haven Crete. Syracuse was firmly allied with Sparta, so that the party aboard would have suffered the fate of an enemy ship had it not been for the fact that the Athenians had been heard singing. Browning here introduces a universal fact, namely, that great literature is a mediating factor among discordant peoples. Furthermore he has endowed Balaustion with the aesthetic nature which appreci-

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 603.

ates the finer aspects of literature, the beautiful and the lyrical. This aesthetic appreciation has led her to the point where, added to her appreciation, there is an adequate knowledge of the best Greek literature. This knowledge serves them in good stead now, for the inhabitants of Syracuse are lovers of Euripides and fall to asking if any of their party can quote from his works:

"Might you know any of his verses too?" (1)

Enemies were made into friends, wars ceased, hatreds died, at the mention of songs from a person the world then loved as they loved Euripides. The captain flung back the answer that one of their number knew Euripides, and called on Balaustion to prove his statement:

"Balaustion, stand forth and confirm my speech!" (2)

Balaustion's opportunity to utilize her lyrical powers was at hand. In the moment that follows one sees her at the height of her youthful power, which by its own force saved her people. She answers:

" . . . I have courage to recite
The main of a whole play from first to last;
That strangest, saddest, sweetest song of his,
ALKESTIS; . . . " (3)

One sees Balaustion's slight figure as her admirers have led her to the steps of the temple of Herakles, from which she speaks, standing there goddess-like with the

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 603.
(2) Ibid., p. 604.
(3) Ibid., p. 604.

power to fascinate the crowd by her words. There is within the group one Euphucles, a Sicilian youth, who, captured by Balaustion's ability and personal glory, took ship with her when they were sent back to Athens, wooed her and found answer ere they reached Peiraieus.

Once she has arrived at Athens, her one passionate desire is to meet Euripides. She is unsatisfied with knowing him solely through his works, instead his works have but created the desire to know the personality of one who could write as he has written. Her wish is satisfied; she and her lover meet Euripides, and she has the opportunity to tell him of her admiration for him and of the incident when his works saved them from captivity. In this interview of hers with a man of such genius and in her warm appreciation of his value to the world, even though to a large degree he is an unsung hero, one sees another phase of her personality, namely, that finer understanding of the higher values of life as illustrated, in human genius and in literature:

> "I soon was at the tragic house, and saw
> The master, held the sacred hand of him
> And laid it to my lips." (1)

Again in her personal interpretation of the play, as she repeats it for her friends, one finds conclusive illustration of that deeper personality with which Browning has endowed her. Her love of poetry, her love of beauty, the quick insight and delicate destinction as to the poet's

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 605.

meaning, all are there, yet carefully concealed by a sense of humility which leads her to excuse her interpolations. They are inconsequential, and come but of Euripides leading:

" 'Tis the poet speaks:
But if I, too, should try and speak at times,
Leading your love to where my love, perchance,
Climbed earlier, found a nest before you know --
Why, bear with the poor climber, for love's sake!
Look at Baccheion's beauty opposite,
The temple with the pillars at the porch!
See you not something beside masonry?
What if my words wind in and out the stone
As yonder ivy, the God's parasite?
Though they leap all the way the pillar leads,
Festoon about the marble, foot to frieze,
And serpentiningly enrich the roof,
Toy with some few bees and a bird or two, --
What then? The column holds the cornice up!" (1)

Balaustion has the ability to throw herself into the situations which present themselves in the Euripidean matter. Her power of imagination leads her to conceive the meeting of Apollo with death as a personal experience. The beautiful simile of the ruined eagle, caught as he swooped in a gorge, is our first striking example of her imaginative power working for itself. It is real to her; she sees and feels it. Further on, when she describes Death's rush on Alkestis, one sees her imagination at its height; for she seems to be able to see the eternally unseen and to make it real.

She allows herself to think aloud and to voice her ideals concerning personality as found in the various types of manhood. Her picture of Herakles shows both weakness and

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 605.

strength of character; he is a composite picture of the values which must go to make a hero. On all heroism indeed, Browning gives this woman the insight to reveal the judgment of her soul:

> "Gladness be with thee, Helper of our world!
> I think this is the authentic sign and seal
> Of Godship, that it ever waxes glad,
> And more glad, until gladness blossoms, bursts
> Into a rage to suffer for mankind,
> And recommence at sorrow: drops like seed
> After the blossom, ultimate of all.
> Say, does the seed scorn earth and seek the sun?
> Surely it has no other end and aim
> Than to drop, once more die into the ground,
> Taste cold and darkness and oblivion there:
> And thence rise, tree-like grow through pain to joy,
> More joy and most joy, -- do man good again." (1)

"Gladness of soul, becoming at one with sorrow and death and rising out of them the conqueror, but always rejoicing in itself, in the joy of the universe and of God, is the root-heroic quality." (2) Furthermore Balaustion is not reserved in her opinions of Admetos; her condemnation of his act carries a bitter contempt for his lack of moral courage, yet her insight into personality leads her to discover a finer self in him which she with subtle skill reveals through his unselfishness and the development of his conscience. With a fine ethical sense she excuses the lower self in him on the basis of heredity and exalts the higher nature. Here she has voiced a sentiment of a far later period than that which she is supposed to represent. She failed to find in Euripides' treatment of the subject regarding Admetos and

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 620.
(2) Brooke: The Poetry of Robert Browning, p. 377.

Alkestos sufficient proof of change, and so, with strong use of her imaginative powers, she creates a new personality for each.

Her personality is but half revealed in this youthful aspect of her life. In "Balaustion's Adventure" she is the carefree girl; in "Aristophanes' Apology" she is the more mature wife. Much has happened to develop the personality of Balaustion. One sees her now on her way back to Rhodes, on board ship with her husband. She has experienced the sadness of Euripides' death, the humiliation and sorrow of the fall of Athens, the advantages of an intellectual discussion with Aristophanes concerning the merits of the various forms of comedy, and she has yielded her influence for the defence of Euripides. Grief stricken and almost overwhelmed because of all this, she seeks refuge in her own home, Rhodes.

As one sees her on board ship in conversation with Euphucles concerning the recent events which have meant so much to her, one gleans much concerning her philosophy of life and death and the mental powers of appreciation and insight which contribute to it. The turmoil of the previous happenings has for the time being had the tendency to disturb her thinking. She questions the value of such turmoil, its relation to progress in this life, and comes to the conclusion that there can be no progress without it. Yet will this contention carry over into a future existence? if not,

will stagnation destroy the value of the future life?

" 'After life,
Better no sentiency than turbulence;
Death cures the low contention.' Be it so!
Yet progress means contention, to my mind." (1)

Euripides' death also has lead her to question the future life. Is Euripides dead, or does he live? Must she grieve at his loss to the world, or has the world but gained him in a larger sense? Have the culture and higher values for which Athens stood perished with the city? Balaustion finds in the very elements that surround her conclusive proof for her belief that the worthwhile in life cannot perish:

"Why should despair be? Since, distinct above
Man's wickedness and folly, flies the wind
And floats the cloud, free transport for our soul
Out of its fleshly durance dim and low, --
Since disembodied soul anticipates
(Thought-borne as now in rapturous unrestraint)
Above all crowding, crystal silentness,
Above all noise, a silver solitude: --
Surely, where thought so bears soul, soul in time
May permanently bide, 'assert the wise,'
There live in peace, there work in hope once more --
Oh, nothing doubt, Philemon! Greed and strife,
Hatred and cark and care, what place have they
In yon blue liberality of heaven?
How the sea helps! How rose-smit earth will rise
Breast-high thence, some bright morning, and be Rhodes!
Heaven, earth and sea, my warrant -- in their name,
Believe -- o'er falsehood, truth is surely sphered.
O'er ugliness beams beauty, o'er this world
Extends that realm where 'as the wise assert,'
Philemon, thou shalt see Euripides
Clearer than mortal sense perceived the man!" (2)

Her philosophy of life, built through suffering and disappointment, has led her to a larger appreciation of the val-

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 629.
(2) Ibid., p. 628.

ues of personality. Even in Aristophanes, whose life and work seem to be rewarded only by failure and the moral decline of his personality, Balaustion is able to see the finer potentialities. There is to her a spark of the divine in every personality:

> "So much god she saw;
> So much she sees now and doew reverence!" (1)

Her imaginative powers and appreciation of nature but lend themselves to the expression of her philosophy. Her faith in the worthwhile in Athenian culture finds play in the imagination, with the result that she rebuilds Athens from the sunset:

> "The living are the dead nor: death be life!
> Why should the sunset yonder waste its wealth?
> Prove thee Olympian! If my heart supply
> Inviolate the structure, -- true to type,
> Build me some spirit-place no flesh shall find,
> As Pheidias may inspire thee; slab on slab,
> Renew Athenai, quarry out the cloud,
> Convert to gold yon west extravagance!
> 'Neath Propulaia, from Akropolis
> By vapory grade and grade, gold all the way,
> Step to thy snow-Pnux, mount thy Bema-cloud,
> Thunder and lighten thence a Hellas through
> That shall be better and more beautiful
> And too august for Sparté's foot to spurn!
> Chasmed in the crag, again our Theatre
> Predominate, one purple; . . ." (2)

Closely allied with her imaginative powers and with her appreciation of personality is her love of nature, from which she draws ample illustrations for the truths she would set forth. The sky, the clouds, the sea, the winds, the sunsets, the ever changing aspects of nature, all lend themselves to

(1) Camb. Ed., p.636.
(2) Ibid., p. 629.

an expression of her thoughts. One sees this especially illustrated as Balaustion, looking at the water over the side of the ship, likens its constant change, due to clouds and wind, to the specific change which she has noted in the personality of Aristophanes:

> "Euthukles, o'er the boat-side, quick, what change,
> Watch, in the water! But a second since,
> It laughed a ripply spread of sun and sea,
> Ray fused with wave, to never disunite.
> Now, sudden all the surface, hard and black,
> Lies a quenched light, dead motion: What the cause?
> Look up and lo, the menace of a cloud
> Has solemnized the sparkling, spoil and sport!
> Just so, some overshadow, some new care
> Stopped all the mirth and mocking on his face
> And left there only such a dark surmise
> -- No wonder if the revel disappeared,
> So did his face shed silence every side!
> I recognized a new man fronting me." (1)

Many readers of Browning feel that Balaustion represents his highest type of womanhood. Decisions of this kind are matters of individual opinion. Nevertheless Balaustion exemplifies an excellent moral and spiritual type of woman. She is stately, young, and beautiful, Grecian in type; the wild pomegranate whose name she bears is representative of her keen intellect, outstanding insight into personality, cultural and aesthetic background, which harmonized together make up her personality. In spite of her youthfulness she possesses the genius of leadership, the ability to inspire, to plan, and to execute. Her patriotism, outstanding devotion to the cultural life of Athens, her knowledge and appreciation of Athenian literature, all contribute to the

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 635.

finer sentiments of her personality. There is within her a sense of moral justice, goodness, and beauty, which enhance the spiritual value of her nature. Passion too plays its part in her life. There is the passion of love, of sorrow, of grief, and of interest in humanity. She is endowed with the capacity for the appreciation of nature, whose laws lead her into a finer philosophy of life and death. "Balaustion is the wild pomegranate flower, burning in a crimson of love among the dark green leaves of steady and sure thought, her powers latent till needed, but when called on and brought to light, flaming with decision and revelation."(1) Balaustion is the first woman in Browning's work to represent Greek life. She not only is representative of its life, but she becomes the incarnation of that aesthetic and poetic appreciation which loves the beautiful in all forms of literature and of art.

(1) Brooke: The Poetry of Robert Browning, p. 371.

Fifine: The Influence of Moral Unstabilization.

Introduction: A Suggestion as to the Nature of the Poem

I. Fifine, the Dark-skinned Rope-dancer:
   A. The physical person:
      1. Bodily traits
      2. Charm and appearance
   B. General environmental factors:
      1. Early environment and parentage
      2. Present environment

II. Fifine, the Unmoral Personality:
   A. Character traits as represented in her profession:
      1. Simplicity
      2. Lack of interest in others
      3. Business-like manner
      4. Refusal of sympathy
      5. Self effacement
   B. Dormant characteristics:
      1. Spirituality
      2. Morality
   C. Brief comparison with other personalities

III. Fifine, Her Unstabilizing Influence:
   A. Causes for this influence
   B. Unconsciousness of influence
   C. The effect of the influence

General Summary:

"Fifine at the Fair" is a poem dealing with the argumentative aspects of the right of experimentation in love. The poem is in monologue form, and is addressed by Don Juan to his wife Elvire, who is used to represent the constant or true type of womanhood; whereas Fifine, a little gypsy girl, is used to represent the contrasting or lower type of womanhood. The poem, introduced by a fanciful prologue, is carried by the author into a lengthy discussion of the psychology of the question. This finally evolves itself into a poetic theory of life, in which in the various personalities and their modes of attraction to the individual are shown to form a composite whole, and in which one becomes the compliment of the other. Fifine is the character study in this poem. One is at the start somewhat hindered in one's delineation of her because of the fact that in the poem she exists only as an influence in the life of Don Juan. She has not the opportunity to speak or act for herself in the present, but she is disclosed through the recollections and imagination of Don Juan. However one may forget that she is thus revealed through the eyes of another and imagine that one has stood within the tent watching the performance and has tried to analyze her personality.

Fifine, the little gypsy wild flower, is a beautiful bit of grace and feminine charm, who is first seen at the regular performance of the itinerant show held at Pornic. One may see her as, poised on a rope, her beauty first caught the imagination of Don Juan. She is slender, small of figure, excellently

proportioned, with that easy grace and felicity of movement which enable her to stand butterfly-like poised in mid air. Her features are clear but dark, with swarthy skin tanned by exposure to the semi-tropical sun. Her hair is curly to the point of becoming a tangled mass of wool. Her eyes are trained to express that which the crowd seeks rather than her own thoughts or emotions; all too often they throw back merely a glossy reflection of the surface gayety of the mob. There is a touch of beauty to the thin ear and gently sloping neck lines. Her person is bedecked in the costume of a page, green and blue in its satiny texture, heavily embossed with metal and glass bits that sparkle in the sunlight. There is, in spite of her beauty, a decided strength and physical power which suggest the coarser form of physique rather than that more spiritual aspect of personality. Fifine is a foreigner to these people; she belongs to some gypsy tribe of a warmer climate, one that has wandered to this land. This tribe seems to represent the result of the intermingling of several tribes, for her features disclose not pure Greek, Italian, or Hebrew traits but a hint of each united in the one:

> "The gypsy's foreign self, no swarth our sun could bake.
> Yet where's a woolly trace degrades the wiry hair?
> And note the Greek-nymph nose, and -- oh, my Hebrew pair
> Of eye and eye -- o'erarched by velvet of the mole --
> That swim as in a sea, that dip and rise and roll,
> Spilling the light around! While either ear is cut
> Thin as a dusk-leaved rose carved from a cocoanut.

> And then, her neck! now, grant you had the power to deck,
> Just as your fancy pleased, the bistre-length of neck,
> Could lay, to shine against its shade, a moonlike row
> Of pearls, each round and white as bubble Cupids blow
> Big out of mother's milk, -- what pearl-moon would surpass
> That string of mock-turquoise, those almandines of glass,
>
> * * *
>
> The boy, and page-costume, till pink and impudence
> End admirably all: complete the creature trips
> Our way now, brings sunshine upon her spangled hips,
> As here she fronts us full, with pose half-frank, half-fierce!" (1)

The environmental factors of Fifine's life no doubt have greatly influenced her character. As to her parents, the place of her birth, or the facts of her early childhood, one knows nothing; there is but left the knowledge that she represents a gypsy tribe of some unknown origin. From this, one may suppose her early life to have been spent largely with nature, gypsy-like living the simple life away from education, people, or the more artificial aspects of city life. Physical growth, development, and activity have been stressed over the mental. She has grown up with the naturalness of a flower, free and lovely, yet without possessing any moral conception of life. For the circumstances that surround her present life as a member of the company of performers, one also must resort to the imagination, as Don Juan has done. There are several plausible reasons for finding Fifine in her present environment: first, she may have grown up as a part of a traveling troop of entertainers who

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 704.

are composed of her own kinsmen, hence the reason for her presence with them; secondly, she may have been forced by the nature of her personal endowments and through the pressure of circumstances to find work that would support herself and those dependent upon her; or thirdly, she may be acting from deliberate choice. Whatever may be the reason, Fifine does not seem actually to fit her environment. One may grant that she is a hapless infant born of execrable parents, doomed to a career such as this which deprives her of the natural rights of her sex, -- home, love, and motherhood, -- yet there seems to be in her personality something that neither heredity nor environment can lessen; she is as a lily that has come up pure and white in spite of the slime from which it has sprung:

> "A hapless infant, doomed (fie on such partial fate!)
> To sink the inborn shame, waive privilege of sex,
> And posture as you see, support the nods and becks
> Of clowns that have their stare, nor always pay its price;
> An infant born perchance as sensitive and nice
> As any soul of you . . ." (1)

There is something about the personality of this girl that attracts one's interest and leads one on to analyze her character with a hope of discovering the real Fifine. What does her professional capacity contribute to the picture? Is she true to the ordinary base and sordid type of circus woman? Browning would have us believe that Fifine possessed something deeper than the surface charm; beneath the light

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 706.

hearted, carefree exterior, adorned to attract, there is a soul, a spark of the divine which, although completely hidden, will some time shine forth and reveal itself. This is the real Fifine, and he has beautifully described this spark of the divine in the simile of the grain of sand,

> "Partake my confidence! No creature's made so mean
> But that, some way, it boasts, could we investigate,
> Its supreme worth: fulfills, by ordinance of fate,
> Its momentary task, gets glory all its own,
> Tastes triumph in the world, pre-eminently alone.
> Where is the single grain of sand, 'mid millions heaped
> Confusedly on the beach, but, did we know, has leaped
> Or will leap, would we wait, i' the century, some once,
> To the very throne of things? -- Earth's brightest for
> the nounce
> When sunshine shall impinge on just that grain's facette
> Which fronts him fullest, first, returns his ray with
> jet
> Of promptest praise, thanks God best in creation's name!
> As firm is my belief, quick sense perceives the same
> Self-vindicating flash illustrate every man
> And woman of our mass, and prove, throughout the plan,
> No detail but, in place alloted it, was prime and perfect." (1)

Yet there is a heavy surface mask that hides this inner spark, which few detect, for she makes no pretense of virtue for herself. One might justly feel that, after all, Fifine is quite the undesirable type, for she gives nothing to society; on the other hand, she asks nothing of it. She appears in her rôle; chooses strength and the ability to perform well her part, is satisfied in the knowledge of her skill and the fact that she has the power to give pleasure to the crown, and asks in return only the fair price of such amusement.

If one compares her to the so-called great women of the

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 707.

ages, Cleopatra, Helen of Troy, and others, one finds that she possesses a power that they in turn lacked, namely, the ability to forget herself, complete self-effacement; she asks no homage or praise and accepts none. Fifine says:

> "Know all of me outside, the rest be emptiness
> For such as you! I call attention to my dress
> Coiffure, outlandish features, lithe memorable limbs,
> Piquant entreaty, all that eye-glance overskims.
> Does this give pleasure? Then, repay the pleasure, put
> Its price i' the tambourine! Do you seek further? Tut!
> I'm just my instrument, -- sound hollow: mere smooth skin
> Stretched o'er gilt framework, I; rub-dub, naught else within--
> Alwasy, for such as you! -- if I have use elsewhere,--
> If certain bells, now mute, can jingle, need you care?
> Be it enough, there's truth i' the pleading, which comports
> With no word spoken out in cottages or courts,
> Since all I plead is, 'Pay for just the sight you see,
> And give no credit to another charm in me!" (1)

She makes no appeal to the sympathy, to the emotions, to the passions, nor even to the soul. There is absolutely no immoral appeal on the part of Fifine. Her life and heart are too simple: she is <u>unmoral</u> rather than <u>immoral</u>. Nevertheless there is something in the nature of such a personality that has its influence in the life of a man. Don Juan felt this as he stood there at the fair.

Something about the freedom, naturalness, utter disregard for the conventional, and the personal charm of Fifine made its impression upon Don Juan. There came to him the mental comparison of this type of woman with his own wife

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 708.

Elvire. He admitted the fact that she had captured his interest, but why?

> "For me, I own defeat, ask but to understand
> The acknowledged victory of whom I call my queen,
> Sexless and bloodless sprite: though mischievous
> and mean,
> Yet free and flower-like too, with loveliness for law,
> And self-sustainment made morality." (1)

The answer to this "Why" is found in the nature of Fifine's personality. She is different from the average woman; her charm is that she represents a new phase of woman, something totally different from the type represented in his wife yet illusive enough to be beyond his grasp. It is this note in Fifine that destroys the moral constancy in Don Juan, although without a doubt Fifine is unconscious of exerting any such influence; for to a person of her character the deeper ethical and moral values of life are foreign. She has, like Topsy, just grown up, without conscience, knowledge of the finer distinctions in right and wrong, or a deep spiritual appreciation of personality, all of which come through education and cultivation. It is the knowledge of this influence in the life of Don Juan that demands the admittance of a soul to Fifine, for he dare not admit even to himself that the physical alone has attracted him.

Fifine is different from anything heretofore in Browning's characters. She represents that natural, unsophisticated type of girl -- unlike the unsophisticated Pippa

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 705.

because she is of the wild-flower type, completely weedlike in development, never having been brought under the influence of moral and spiritual cultivation, unmoral in her very nature. Fifine is a lovely gypsy girl, whom one would admire as one might admire an Indian girl, chiefly because of her physical powers and racial characteristics. She is attractive in her dress and general appearance; but one would soon tire of her surface attractions and long for the gentle femininity which befits true woman. Her influence is unconsciously destructive, because of the simple, unconventional liberty which she enjoys. She contributes little if anything to the value of society and in return asks nothing, thus preventing that larger benefit that comes from the interplay of personality. Fifine is of the earth earthy, yet one can love her for the spark of the divine which one believes to be incarnate in the soul, and which some day may influence the whole person Fifine and change her personality. Fifine served Don Juan by making him consider the metaphysical value of personality, She may yet serve one in a similar way; for one is forced to admit that the soul is attainable only through the flesh -- and Fifine has a soul.

Feminine Types Slightly Delineated

I. Ottima

II. Polyxena

III. Cristina

IV. Evelyn Hope

V. Porphyria

Inasmuch as the story of "Pippa Passes" has been studied in a preceding chapter, the reader is not unfamiliar with the character Ottima. When one casts aside the delightful fancy of Pippa and views Ottima from a more censorious angle one discovers a far different personality from that of the little silk winder. Ottima is the young wife of Luca, wealthy mill-owner of Asolo, whose beautiful estate rests on the hillside overlooking the village. The entire setting is typically Italian, with its low-studded stone house, rough wooden shutters, cultivated grounds and shrub houses. Here, amidst the beauty of nature and material resources dwells the lady Ottima.

We know nothing of Ottima's former position in life; but perhaps she was a beautiful Italian girl, possible of the better class, who became infatuated with Luca because of his amorous attentions to her and the wealth that he possessed, and therefore married him. There is no suggestion in the story that Ottima ever really loved Luca. If not, one may understand how she would so soon have tired of him and craved a younger companion. At this point Browning introduces Ottima to his readers.

Ottima is physically a very attractive woman: the soft curves and lines of her body yield themselves to produce grace and charm; she is dark-haired and dark-eyed, with exsanguine, olive complexion heightened and accentuated by the artful use of cosmetics; yet she has an attractiveness which

falls short of the truer beauty that is expressed in harmony of features with character. Yet she does possess great physical beauty. This same beauty and attractiveness which won her Luca's wealth now serves as her means for the seduction of Sebald, who, when he has come to himself, realizes that there can be no permanent beauty in her because character is lacking:

> "My God, and she is emptied of it now!
> Outright now! -- how miraculously gone
> All of the grace -- had she not strange grace once?
> Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it likes,
> No purpose holds the features up together,
> Only the cloven brow and puckered chin
> Stay in their places: and the very hair,
> That seemed to have a sort of life in it,
> Drops, a dead web!
> * * *
> That round great full-orbed face, where not an angle
> Broke the delicious indolence -- all broken!
> * * *
> My God!
> Those morbid olive faultless shoulder-blades --
> I should have known there was no blood beneath!" (1)

Selfish desire becomes the ruling passion in Ottima's life; this is evidenced by an analysis of her various forms of conduct. Selfish desire for material possessions and social prestige have lead her to marry Luca; selfish desire for a younger lover has lead her to prove false to him, to seduce Sebald, and lastly to murder her husband; selfish desire for her own happiness over that of another has lead to the destruction of the good in Sebald. In fact, selfish desire became the motive for every act of her live, as the following evidence will clearly illustrate.

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 133.

Sebald is not a stranger to Ottima: she has seen him as he came to the home on business with Luca; she has watched him and known him; what is more, she knew that she possessed a power of fascination that would win him to her. With the boldness of one lacking completely finer feminine modesty she has flirted with him, made love to him, schemed to arrange things so that she might be alone with him, and even enticed him to the shrub-house in the early morning hours while her husband slept. Each move marks a bold, selfish aggressiveness which is quite unlovely in woman. Slowly, by her own carnal passion, she has kindled the fire of her nature until it bursts forth in flames which Browning has compared to the fury of the thunder storm. There is not the slightest tremor of conscience to suggest that she feels any guilt in her actions. Although in a half jesting manner she refers to her acts as sin, yet she is vile enough to continue to indulge herself until ultimately her indulgence leads her to the murder of her husband. Indeed, such total depravity of conscience is hers that she dares to dissuade Sebald from remorse. She glories in her power over him and, with selfish pagan delight, bids him proclaim her his queen:

> "Bind it thrice about my brow;
> Crown me your queen, your spirit's arbitress,
> Magnificent in sin. Say that!" (1)

Ottima has that sinister ability not only to seduce Sebald but to hold him to her, to fascinate with her sin --

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 133.

her lust -- until he is gripped by a force of nature which, though evil, is stronger than his own:

> "She would succeed in her absurd attempt,
> And fascinate by sinning, show herself
> Superior -- guilt from its excess superior
> To innocence!" (1)

When she realizes that Sebald's supposed love has been turned to a violent hatred Ottima's first appearance of remorse is again purely selfish. This remorse is no doubt awakened chiefly by Sebald's overpowering sense of moral wrong, which leads him to the condemnation of his act, rather than by any stimulus in her own soul. Once there is awakened in her that spark of self-sacrifice, she is forced to condemn herself, not Sebald, for the entire crime:

> "Me! No, no, Sebald, not yourself -- kill me!
> Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill me --"
> * * *
> Not me -- to him, O God, be merciful!" (2)

Our last view of Ottima is one almost too pathetic for words; she is suffering through the first agonies of redemption, and her soul is torn between selfish desire and true remorse until death seems an easy way of escape.

Ottima becomes one of the most repulsive characters of Browning's work. There is no virtue interspersed with the evil to soften the coarseness of the nature of her relationship to Sebald. She is selfish, carnal, mean, passionate, bold, aggressive, and wholly unlovely. The physical beauty

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 133.
(2) Camb. Ed., p. 133

which she possessed is emptied of all true character and reflects only the shallowness of her soul. Her true womanly spirit is lacking; and in the end that latent spark of character which flames up for the salvation of her soul seems more the result of the author's pity for his character than of any true spirit within herself. Her whole nature seems like a sketch splashed with daubs of ungradated color rather than a harmony of soft shades which blends to make the perfect picture.

"King Victor and King Charles" is an historical tragedy of the early eighteenth century. King VictorII is about to abdicate his throne in favor of his son and only heir,Charles. King Victor's reasons for abdicating are more personal than political, for he desires to marry one whom he may not marry and remain king. Prince Charles, officially crowned, rules effectively for about a year, at the end of which time Victor, restless in his obscruity, is scheming for the recovery of his kingdom. He finally reaches the point where he boldly demands the throne; but King Charles refuses, and his wife Polyxena attempts to aid him in holding to his refusal, believing that there is greater virtue in resistance than in yielding. However Charles, chiefly because of filial devotion, yields to Victor; but Victor's rule is short, having been suddenly terminated by his death.

Unlike Lady Carlisle, in Strafford, Polyxena is a real historical personage; she was the wife of King Charles, having married him while Charles was Prince of Piedmont. History describes her as a beautiful young woman, with much of the graceful poise and dignity befitting her court life. Polyxena is a woman of conspicuous mental ability. Because of her understanding of the political situation, she is able to be the constant advisor of her husband; and when one compares the mental ability of the two, one is forced to admit that the mind of Polyxena is the more forceful because of her versatility and open-mindedness. Her advice and sug-

gestions to Charles were beneficial because she always considered the various sides of a question, and only after careful contemplation, free from personal prejudice, stated her beliefs. A further phase of her mental power is represented in her insight into personality. Her judgments of Victor, D'Ormea, and of her husband are representative of their true personalities.

Shakespeare's women when possessing alert mental powers are often represented without the finer emotions of human nature. This is not the case with Polyxena: her love for Charles is one of the most admirable phases of her character; it is that deep spiritual love that is conscious of the faults of the one loved while it magnifies his virtues. Polyxena is always conscious of her husband's limitations; she realizes that he is painfully sensitive, that he possesses a vacillating will, and that at times he is even suspicious of her motives. Yet with heroic fortitude she overlooks these weaknesses in his personality, endures his suspicion, and by the force of her personality stimulates him to self-respect and renewed courage. She is able to see and to make others see the good in Charles. She dreams of the time when he will be free from the temptations of the life he is now living and they together will be able to live their own lives:

> "Ne'er was my husband for the wily King
> And the unworthy subjects: be it so!
> Come you safe out of them, my Charles! Our life
> Grows not the broad and dazzling life, I dreamed
> Might prove your lot; for strength was shut in you

None guessed but I -- strength which, untrammelled once,
Had little shamed your vaunted ancestry --
Patience and self-devotion, fortitude,
Simplicity and utter truthfulness
-- All which, they shout to lose!" (1)

Polyxena is also the possessor of high moral ideals; at times she has difficulty in freeing herself from her suspicion of the motives which actuate King Victor, but once she has arrived at the right and wrong of any given issue she cannot be swayed from what she believes to be the right. This is attested in the first place by her strong desire that Charles refuse the crown; and in the second place, when he has accepted the crown and for a year lived true to his pledge of kingship, that he resist the entreaty of Victor, inasmuch as there is a higher moral virtue in resistence in this case than in yielding. Her idealism grows out of her faith in God and the belief that kings are appointed by him to rule with moral justice and integrity, and that in turn they are directly responsible to God, not to popular opinion:

"King Charles! Pause here upon this strip of time
Allotted you out of eternity!
Crowns are from God: you in his name hold yours.
Your life's no least thing, were it fit your life
Should be abjured along with rule; but now,
Keep both! Your duty is to live and rule --
You, who would vulgarly look fine enough
In the world's eye, deserting your soul's charge, --
Ay, you would have men's praise, . . ." (2)

* * *

"What matters happiness?
Duty! There's man's one moment: this is yours!" (3)

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 152.
(2) Camb. Ed., p. 161.
(3) Camb. Ed., p. 162.

Polyxena has a strong courage, and it is this courage which shows her to be more self-sustained than her husband. One is led to realize that she is by far the stronger of the two personalities, yet she devotes her strength to the influencing of Charles. Although she is conscious of his weaknesses, she is not content merely to forgive them, she consciously attempts to lift him to a higher level, to develop the best in his personality to the exclusion of the rest. Polyxena is highly representative of the type of woman to whom moral duty is the one outstanding virtue of life, and to whom intellect and love are made contributary. This characteristic permeates her entire life although often she is unconscious of it. Its effect is apparent in her own thinking and in her advice to Charles.

"Cristina," another of the short lyrical poems of Browning's early period, represents Cristian, Queen of Sweden, who has been loved and for the moment returns love, but who in the end surrenders it for other interests. The poem itself is rather to be considered as a philosophical discussion of love as the special gain of the soul-life than the development of any specific personality. However, it is decidedly interesting to analyze the personality of one who is able to awaken such a love in another. The situation sketched is that of a man and a woman whom a glance has united, each having momentarily realized that in the other was the object of love. The knowledge comes to the one to ennoble and enrich life, whereas the knowledge comes to the other only to be lightly cast aside for lesser values. Herein is the paradox of life: he has spiritually gained her; whereas she has lost him.

Cristina, representing the Queen, is a young woman possessing wealth and power. History describes her as beautiful, having a certain unique charm of manner. It may have been either this physical attractiveness or a deeper winsomeness of personality that caused her lover to be drawn to her. When they met we do not know, possibly the encounter was merely at the passing of her royal carriage along the street. Whenever it was, there was in that moment time for a mutual awakening of true love; eyes met, and the souls touched and parted.

Her maturity and education for life warrant the belief that she felt and knew the meaning of this glance between them. Just how much of herself she gave in that moment, it is difficult to determine. She may only have intended to flirt with him; or possibly she was unconscious that she had exerted any influence over him until the moment when her soul felt his love.

Whatever may have been the cause of this awakened love in Cristina, she was able by the sheer force of will to prevent its development. Her position, her honor,her cherished ambitions, were more to her than love, and so she deliberately refused it and allowed it to die at the moment of its birth. This consideration suggests a selfish, self-centered personality, incapable of experiencing that profound love of which the man speaks. She has no consideration for the fact that love has been awakened in him, or for what this awakening may mean to him.

Browning would suggest an independent, haughty, impatient, selfish, ambitious type of person, rather than the gentle, pure amorous type. Yet within it must be recognized the the fact that that moment of love given was of the purest; for the gift was caught and helf as the ultimate good in the life of the man she once loved. Had Cristina had the moral courage to sustain love, she would have found in her lover a force that would have changed her life completely; but her temperament does not warrant such an ex-

perience of true love. It is impossible for her to experience more than the flash of such a love, to sense clearly for a moment love's warmth, only in the next moment to feel the cold ashes and realize that she has lost it forever.

Cristina represents the particular rather than the universal experience to woman. Browning has given us the rare type instead of the common type. It is wholly unnatural for woman to experience love only to kill it because of honor, power, or wealth, yet this is the very thing that Cristina has done. Somehow one feels a sense of pity for her because of the great lack which she must have experienced in life. The brevity of the poem permits only a slight delineation of the character. Yet in this brief sketch one is aware of the abnormality and artificiality of the woman. One comes to appreciate her,not as a personality, but rather as a study in the unusual.

"Evelyn Hope," the personality represented in the short poem bearing the same title, is one of the more slightly delineated but one of the most delightful of all Browning's creations. The brevity of the poem leaves much to the imagination of the reader, yet within the seven brief stanzas the poet has interfused sufficient details so that, piecing them together, we are able to image the perfect whole of a beautiful character.

Evelyn was hardly more than a child in years, for the sixteen summers had passed quickly, leaving only their warmth and beauty upon her. One may well think of her as just a simple English girl, living the fulness of her life in a cozy little cottage somewhere out away from the busy world. Possibly a simple thatched roof cottage, with its tiny yard made bright with the flowers that she loved, cheerful and homey with those soft touches of a woman's hand.

Evelyn was a beautiful girl: curly hair of "amber" hue shining in the sun like burnished gold, lily-like skin made lovely with the blush of color in her cheeks and the soft "geranium's red" in her lips; a girlish figure, still slender fingers, -- in fact, pure girlhood beauty unchanged by time.

Her beauty of character far surpasses her physical beauty and but lends its soft glow to it. Evelyn is typical of true girlhood, for she has looked into the future and dreamed dreams; there is within her heart many a hidden aspiration

and ideal, to be fulfilled in the tomorrow. Her present life is real to her. Each day is busy with the little "duties"and "cares" that the passing moment brings to her; she is first here then there, always doing well the simplest little task. One may see her about the garden, with a song on her lips and the very presence of God in her heart; for her soul is as pure as the dew. She is good with that spontaneous goodness that is natural. She has not wandered far from the little village she calls home; thus temptation has not blighted her purity or taken from her that first bloom of virginity.

Evelyn is such a sweet, unsophisticated, unspoiled type of girl, that everybody loves her. She in turn has wonderful capacity for returning love, but her heart has not yet felt the tremble of that deeper love of woman for her mate, and so, although she is passionately loved, she remains wholly unaware of that love.

Life to Evelyn is brief, yet each moment seems to have been filled with that which was most worthwhile. When at sixteen death takes her, it seems as if the Master Gardener while walking through the Garden had realized the beauty and perfection of this flower and transplanted it that it might come to full fruition in his garden.

Evelyn Hope is the essence of truth, beauty, and goodness; she is natural, real, actively concerned with life about her, yet somehow too etherial to seem a part of it. She is more spirit than flesh; however, something about her

whole life seems unnatural, impractical. She is as one who has spent her days within the cloister walls, sheltered from all that would harm her and totally innocent of actual life in the busy world. She would be lost among the deeper experiences of life, for she is unprepared to meet them; moral strength has not been developed through the medium of decision. She is entirely lacking in that sturdy ethical nature which is necessary to meet everyday life. There is nowhere a more beautiful soul than the soul of Evelyn Hope, who waits her lover in the spirit world; one leaves her with a feeling that she is "altogether lovely," yet so unprepared for life in a world which demands the resistance of a strong moral nature.

The brief poem "Porphyria's Lover" sketches for us the personality of Porphyria. Porphyria is a beautiful girl of age, who is deeply attached to her lover but who lacks the moral courage to break the ties of the artificial life she is living and give herself unreservedly to him. Her life is a struggle between desire and love. In the moment when love seems to have conquered she meets death at the hand of her lover that he may keep her forever as she then was to him.

Porphyria belongs to a higher social class than her lover, a fact that has kept them separated. She is young, with beautiful "yellow hair" and blue eyes, eyes that are a bit too cold with a pride that hurts, and with the slender and graceful form which denotes refinement. Her life is full with the many social engagements that comprise the average day of one in her social position. She is caught in the whirlpool of life without time to think deeply; yet there is more to her personality than is apparent on the surface. Somewhere she has met and begun to love the man who loves her. Her inner nature is stirred by this love, with the result that one sees taking place in her soul a struggle between love and the artificial life that she is living. She seems incapable of surrendering power, wealth, position, and the round of social activities that constitute her happiness for love and for what love with this man

has to offer. The struggle becomes intense. There is just enough of the spark of true passion in her soul to make impossible for her the killing love, yet she lacks the strong moral courage to be true to love at the cost of a possible sacrifice of all else.

The moment that Browning has sketched for us is a moment when love seems to have triumphed. She has been enjoying the thrills of some gay social event, possible with a hope of forgetting the inner longing in her heart; but to forget is impossible. In a moment of rashness she leaves her luxurient shelter and, braving the cheerlessness of night and heavy rain, goes to the cottage of her lover to bring cheer and comfort in his loneliness. There is displayed in this act a dominant courage which, had it been allowed to develop, would have been admirable. Having done all that was possible to minister to his comfort, she realizes that her ministry does not satisfy either of them; so, with pure love in her soul, she ceases to struggle and momentarily gives herself to him:

> "When no voice replied,
> She put my arm about her waist,
> And made her smooth white shoulder bare
> And all her yellow hair displaced,
> And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
> And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
> Murmuring how she loved me--" (1)

Her moment of complete surrender is beautiful in its purity and goodness, yet fatal because of its transiency:

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 286

"That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good: . . ."(1)

If she had had the moral strength to make that moment not an instant which would be followed by vain pride and selfishness but the beginning of a life of pure love, we should have known her as another and different Porphyria. But that moral weakness already referred to prevails. Her lover himself senses that fact, and the result is his murder of her in the moment when she has expressed her true soul that he may thus prevent her from ever again becoming the lesser self that she is capable of becoming. The author's treatment of his character evidences the fact that he meant the reader to feel that Porphyria desired love and the more worthwhile values of life, yet because of her environment and weak moral nature she was unable to force the struggle to a moral victory:

" --she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavor,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me forever." (2)

Porphyria is like many a person in real life, possessing a soul and a depth of personality deep enough to see and appreciate the higher values of life yet without that strong moral courage which leads on to the attainment of these values at any cost. There is much of the good, true, and beautiful in the character Porphyria, yet the reader leaves her with a feeling of regret that she did not lose her selfish pride in love.

(1) Camb. Ed. p. 286.
(2) Ibid., p. 286.

Nameless But Real Characters

I. Any Wife To Any Husband

II. Dis Aliter Visum

III. A Light Woman

IV. A Pretty Woman

V. Time's Revenges

VI. The Laboratory

VII. Flight of the Duchess

VIII. The Italian in England

IX. By The Fireside

X. One Word More

Nameless but Real Characters

Browning has, in his shorter lyrical poems, created many characters who exemplify some one phase of feminine personality and yet are insufficiently delineated to warrant the naming of them. However these characters are very real to the student of Browning and come to be regarded as vital personalities.

The first group of poems is composed of "Any Wife to Any Husband" and "Dîs Aliter Visum." Both poems represent the inner thoughts and emotions of woman seen as they burst forth in a frenzy of passion. "Any Wife to Any Husband" is a brief poem in which the woman, as she is dying, voices the inner fears of her heart concerning the fidelity of her husband's love after she is dead. As long as she is alive and with him she has complete faith in her power to hold his love; but she realizes the weakness of his nature and fears that as soon as she is no longer with him he will waver in his devotion to her memory so that the love he brings her when they meet again will not be perfect. She is true to her sex: her own nature is kind and gentle, as shown by her words; she knows the intrinsic value of true faithfulness, so that the picture she draws is beautiful in its simplicity; yet if one analyzes her words to discern her motive one finds that it is the passion of jealousy that has burst forth at last. She jealously desires to claim his whole love for herself:

> "Since mine thou wast, mine art and mine shall be
> Faithful or faithless, ..." (1)

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 188.

This is one of the most subtle forms of jealousy; it is destructive of love because without complete faith love fails to expand. It would not be difficult to excuse jealousy in this form during her life, but one finds difficulty in understanding how, nearing the end of life as this woman is, her soul can apparently carry this jealousy over into eternity. One feels that facing death the soul would desire to purify itself from all such passions. However jealousy is so firmly planted in the soul of this woman -- as no doubt it is in many a soul -- that there is no uprooting it. One must pity and not blame in circumstances such as this.

"Dis Aliter Visum" more fully illustrates the release of pent-up passion. Here is a woman who, on the meeting of her lover ten years after he has left her, relieves the emotions of her soul that have been dammed back all these years. She condemns the man for his past actions, and in a fit of passion declares that he has ruined four lives. Her emotion leads her into sarcasm as she reminds him of their earlier years together when they were in love with each other and how, had he not lacked the moral courage to be true to this love, they might have continued happy together. The stanzas which are illustrative of her outburst of passion also represent a notably accurate depiction of the soul of a woman in society.

Browning was especially fond of the short, natural lyric, through which he might readily express intricate phases of personality which impressed themselves upon him with a

flash, often while attending some social function, only to vanish as quickly; often never to reappear. Among these short but lovely lyrics are: "A Light Woman" and "A Pretty Woman." The first is the story of a man who desires to extricate his friend from the toils of a "Light Woman." In order to accomplish this he courts her himself, planning shortly to abandon her. He discovers only after it is too late that instead of accomplishing her purpose he has won her heart. He is not in a position to marry her, yet he dares not cast her away. This situation not only presents an ethical problem it attests the truth of the belief that there is within the soul of every woman, no matter how bad she may be, a note of true love that will respond when the right key has been struck.

The second of these lyrics is the picture of an exquisitely "Pretty Woman," yet hopelessly shallow. Her beauty is all; she has no depth of character, no usefulness, and no finer appreciation of love in spite of the fact that her prettiness wins her unnumbered admirers. Browning permits himself to philosophize a bit: he likens her to a beautiful but unfragrant rose, which is best graced not by reproducing its petal in "rosy rubies" for a king to hoard nor by plucking and wearing it but rather by simply letting it grow just where it is. He does not entirely discount the value of a merely "Pretty Woman" but he believes her to be of real use when just left alone to be admired.

Browning never glozed over personality in order to avoid depicting the unlovely aspects; he painted life as he believed it to be, with its vices as well as its virtues. "Time's Revenges" and "The Laboratory" are illustrative of the lowest passions of woman. The former is the story of a woman who will destroy body and soul of the one who loves her if she can secure the gratification of her personal desires:

> "So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,
> Filled full, eaten out and in
> With the face of her, the eyes of her,
> The lips, the little chin, the stir
> Of shadow, round her mouth; and she
> --I'll tell you-- calmly would decree
> That I should roast at a slow fire
> If that would compass her desire
> And make her one that they invite
> To the famous ball tomorrow night." (1)

The latter poem is the colorful sketch of a woman of the royal court, in whom every appearance of decency and honour is dead. She appears at the laboratory of a noted chemist, and is seen watching him mix the poison which she will administer to her rival. She watches its preparation with an eager ferocious joy, dimmed only by the fear that the preparation may not accomplish its purpose. Her motive is jealousy, though not in its pure form, for it is mixed with the hatred bred by envy. Jealousy would presuppose that love had existed, but this woman is too base for love. Lustful desire and luxury are to be found in a woman of this type; therefore, with love lacking, hate and envy rule supreme.

(1) Camb. Ed., p. 258.

"The Flight of the Duchess" lends itself to our picture of woman in the expression of the natural spontaneity common to her sex, which,although often beaten to silence, cannot be killed. The Duchess is a blithesome young girl, happy in her freedom fron the convent, thrilling with eagerness to see life and really to live it. She is at one with nature; her soul is pure and her faith in the universe is complete. Marriage to the Duke, who is narrow-minded, pompous, and self-sufficient, deadens her soul so that she longs to be free. A way of escape comes in the wandering gypsy who claims her for the natural life for which she was intended. Unrestricted, her whole nature blossoms forth in beauty and joy.

"The Italian in England" depicts the simple yet profound qualities found in a girl of the peasant class. An Italian patriot, hiding from the Austrian forces, is compelled because of hunger to disclose his place of concealment to a peasant girl. She in turn tactfully aids him, and, at the risk of her own life, had she been caught, and by the refusal of the money which might have been hers had she betrayed him, she proves faithful to him. One loves the memory of her as did the young Italian who years afterward still revered her memory and longed to see her once more that he might again express his gratitude for her fidelity to him.

One might continue this list to a greater length were one to include all of the shorter poems which touch upon the

phases of woman's true self, but to do so would add little to the value of this study. Briefly, in closing, one would call attention to the fact that Mrs. Browning is ofter painted in these lyric poems. Robert Browning writes of her always with the most tender and sacred delicacy, with a harmonious blending of the real with the fanciful, yet with a passion of love both in rememberance of her and in his longing for the future. The mature love represented in "By the Fireside," and the deeper appreciative love of "One Word More," are typical of Browning's interpretation of the beautiful character of his wife.

General Summary

Browning was fortunate both in reagrd to his good birth and parentage, and in regard to his own natural social nature; for it gave him the opportunity to meet all classes of people and to study varying types of individuals at first hand. Furthermore he was extremely fortunate in his unique marriage which gave him the understanding companionship of one of the world's most sensitive, profound women. From these two channels Browning was able to draw an abundance of source material and, aided by his genius, he has welded this material into a series of admirable character studies.

These characters he has developed through a careful psychological treatment which has brought out the inner and more subtle phases of personality often unfamiliar to the casual student of human nature. Browning has observed certain modes of action and reaction, carefully noted the physical influences which have been brought to play upon the individual, and then with almost perfect accuracy depicted the emotions and interests which have been the motivating factors in the experience. He has not limited himself to any one class of society; he has drawn equally from all calsses that he might more fully prove the truth of his theory, hamely, that character may be developed to its highest in spite of heridity and environment. Browning has so minutely analyzed the character of woman in her several aspects that a unification of his conceptions will yield the synthetic type of woman as Browning knew her.

To Browning woman is first of all natural, real, simple, innocent, with a general wholesomeness and unsophistication. Pippa, Evelyn Hope, Mildred and Fifine are illustrative of these characteristics. Unlike many writers of his century, Browning has endowed his women with a highly developed intellectuality. In many cases their mentality exceeds that of the male personages represented in the same poem. The knowledge of Balaustion; the political intrigue of Palma; the open-mindedness of Domizia; and the skillful deceit of Constance, are only a few of the many examples which attest this fact.

The moral nature of woman is as a sensitive and highly strung instrument but varies fundamentally with the individual. Mildred represents that type of person which is highly sensitive to her guilt. Passing from this ultra-sensitive type he has traced the moral integrity of woman through its several degrees represented in Pompilia, Pippa, and Lady Carlisle, to the extreme lack of moral virtue represented in Fifine, Christina and Ottima. Love and the love-life are an intrinsic part of feminine nature and are equally as diversified in form as any other character trait. There is the highest type of mother-love represented in Pompilia; the spiritual love of man for woman, as in Evelyn Hope; the unrequited love of James Lee's Wife; the unselfish love of Lady Carlisle; the selfish love of Lucrezia; and the lustful love of Ottima.

Jealousy, hatred, envy, and revenge are also disclosed

by Browning as the more subtle attributes of woman, and are often allied to the baser forms of selfish passionate love. These were most repulsive to him; he cited them only in contrast to the higher virtues. Nevertheless he was frank and truthful in his presentation of the bad as well as of the good.

Browning's insight into feminine nature may be, in part, attributed to the frank sincere way in which Mrs. Browning lived her own life, and to her willingness to discuss the phases of woman's inner nature with her husband. Yet in the last analysis one must come to realize that Browning was endowed with a certain aptitude which, when increased by his concentrated study and his social interest in people, made him a noted connoisseur of feminine personality and became the medium by which he was able to disclose phases of woman's personality heretofore unrecognized even by woman herself.

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